

# Presidential Influence on Democratic Norms

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## Abstract

Do voters value their political party over democracy? This paper examines how citizens make the trade-off between party loyalty and democracy when a president of their party violates essential democratic norms. Using two large- $n$  original survey experiments, I show that partisanship is a predominant lens through which people view democracy. I find that, while in the aggregate people are fairly sensitive to differences in the severity of norm violations, they often choose their party and their president over support for those norms. Additionally, I demonstrate that members of the Democratic and Republican parties are starkly different in their treatment of democracy; Republican respondents have a higher tolerance for norm violations than Democratic respondents in all scenarios. This paper highlights the influence presidents have over democracy due to strong party allegiance.

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# 1 Introduction

On July 30, 2020, President Donald Trump tweeted that the 2020 election would be the most inaccurate and fraudulent election because of mail-in voting. Aside from the fact that the president of the United States was spreading blatant misinformation about voting, this statement is incredibly concerning because President Trump flagrantly violated democratic norms around regular, free elections. Unfortunately, this is not the first time President Trump has violated important democratic norms throughout his presidency. This behavior is consistent with the behavior of authoritarian leaders that are trying to subvert rules; they adjust the system in small ways to get the referees on their side, thereby allowing them to continue to chip at democratic norms without consequences (Levitsky & Ziblatt 2018).

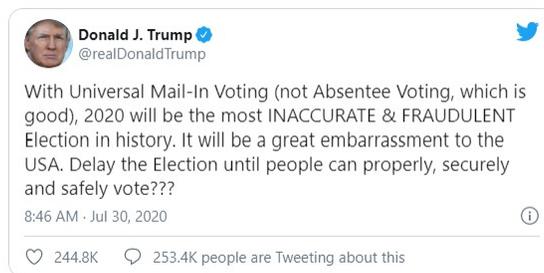


Figure 1: July 30, 2020 President Trump Tweet

While democratic norms may not be the official rules themselves, they are very important to ensuring the rules, and democracy as a whole, function properly. As written by Levitsky and Ziblatt, "all successful democracies rely on informal rules that, though not found in the constitution or any laws, are widely known and respected" (100, 2018). Understanding democratic norms is very important for understanding the longevity of a democracy, but study of these norms has been neglected in countries with strong democracies, because their strength been taken for granted (Levitsky & Ziblatt 2018).

However, populism has recently swept through previously strong democracies and challenged the strength of democratic governance in these countries, including the United States (Judis 2016, Howell & Moe 2020). The January 6, 2021 U.S. capitol siege by a pro-Trump

mob openly supported by President Trump cemented the fact that President Trump’s populist rhetoric rife with misinformation has had a very real impact on how citizens value democratic norms. More importantly, the events of January 6 demonstrate that taking democratic strength for granted is not an option, and the interaction between the president and the people in his role as protector of democracy should be taken very seriously.

This paper examines how U.S. presidents influence citizens’ evaluations of democratic norms and how that varies across parties. While we know very little about presidential influence on democratic norms, we know that U.S. presidents have influence over public opinion among partisans (Barber & Pope 2019). Presidents are often seen as the leaders of democracy, so it should follow that presidential influence extends to perceptions of democratic norms, though this theory has not been tested. Additionally, members of the two major political parties have become intensely loyal to their party and follow party cues without pause (Achen & Bartels 2016). And while many elites offer partisan cues, presidents play a unique leadership role that is distinct to the office of the president, both as the leader of the United States and as the de-facto party leader. I ask the question of whether voters are more willing to allow violations of democratic norms if the violator is a president of their party.

To answer this question, I use two large- $n$  original survey experiments on presidential actions wherein respondents are cued on party in different ways to test whether they choose party over democracy. I find that, while in the aggregate people are reasonably sensitive to differences in the severity of democratic norms, nonetheless they often choose their party and their president over support for democratic norms. Additionally, I demonstrate that members of the Democratic and Republican parties are starkly different in their treatment of democracy; Republican respondents have a higher tolerance for norm violations than Democratic respondents in all scenarios. This asymmetric commitment to democracy along partisan lines paints a dismal picture of the health of American democracy.

For the remainder of the paper, I will proceed as follows. First, I will describe what we know about democratic norms, presidential influence, and partisanship, and how they

interact together. Then, I will present the methodology for the studies. After, I will present the results of the *explicit* partisan cue study (Study 1), and then the results of the *implicit* partisan cue study (Study 2). Finally, I will finish with some concluding thoughts on the implications of a president of the United States having power to weaken adherence to democratic norms, particularly among his partisan supporters.

## 2 Literature Review

In this section I establish the background information necessary to study voter opinion on partisan presidential leadership in maintaining democratic norms in the United States. First, I walk through what we know about how voters view democratic norms in the United States, establishing that we in fact know very little systematically. Next, I argue that the increasing deep loyalty within the two major political parties combined with evolving demographics in this country have resulted in two fundamentally different political parties, where one major difference has become their treatment of democracy. Last, I establish why U.S. presidents are key players in studying, maintaining, and destroying democratic norms. Combined, these three segments of information provide important background on understanding the partisan presidential leadership effect on democratic norms.

### 2.1 Democratic Norms in the United States

Social norms, such as not texting at the dinner table or greeting someone with a handshake, are generally accepted behaviors that help establish order in society. Similarly, democratic norms are generally accepted practices in a democracy that help maintain order. Colloquially called the “guardrails of democracy,” democratic norms are also called informal institutions because they support the formal institutions through informal means. While precise definitions and naming of democratic norms vary by scholar, most agree that democratic norms have two parts: a) a shared understanding of the unwritten rule, and b) an enforcement channel outside of formal or legal means that will be used if the norm is broken. In this

paper, I rely on Helmke and Levitsky’s comprehensive definition, wherein they define democratic norms as “socially shared rules, usually unwritten, that are created, communicated, and enforced outside officially sanctioned channels” (Levitsky & Helmke 2006, 5). In this section, I show that how voters view democratic norms in the United States has been severely understudied, which is now a detriment given the unhealthy state of U.S. democracy.

Some examples of important norms in the United States are a peaceful transfer of power, trusting election results, and working with your political opponents. These norms work together to ensure the formal rules of democracy aren’t altered, thus protecting democracy itself. Another important democratic norm in the United States is forbearance, which means “politicians do not use their institutional prerogatives to the hilt, even if it is technically legal to do so, for such action could imperil the existing system” (Levitsky & Ziblatt 2018, 106). Presidential term limits in the United States are a prime example of adherence to forbearance. Prior to President Franklin D. Roosevelt, presidents being limited to two terms was not a law but simply a guideline. This trend began with President George Washington choosing to not seek another term even though he was very popular, and other presidents followed suit. This guideline was held so firmly that when Ulysses S. Grant’s friends encouraged him to run for a third term, the House of Representatives passed a resolution stating that deviating from the two-term norm would be “unwise, unpatriotic, and fraught with peril to our free institutions.” In response to President Roosevelt’s violation of the two-term presidency, the 22<sup>nd</sup> amendment was passed, which enforced the norm by creating a formal rule.

Many academics have studied citizen commitment to democratic norms. For example, Stouffer asked respondents how they felt about civil liberties in the abstract, and then asked them about civil liberties in more specific situations. In general, he found that people did not have an all-around commitment to civil liberties but instead wavered their support based on the content itself (Stouffer 1955). McClosky and Brill also studied tolerance around civil liberties. Similar to Stouffer, they found that people had a wavering commitment to democratic norms when pressed about specific situations (McClosky & Brill 1983).<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>See also (Prothro & Grigg 1960)

With access to survey research becoming increasingly affordable for researchers in recent years, more surveys have been conducted asking about democracy. However, this research suffers from methodological issues in the question wording that prevents them from being interpretable. Many of these questions use the term “democracy,” without offering any further specifications. The problem with this approach is that it uses a term that has many components to itself. This means respondents will think about the term differently and therefore respond differently. A key to writing a good survey question is to write it in such a way that both the researcher and the respondent have the same understanding of what is being talked about, and many of these questions do not live up to this standard (Groves et al. 2009). As such, our study of democratic norms has still been limited due to methodological challenges.

In sum, democratic norms support democracy in a crucial way, despite their perhaps “invisible” status. We have some evidence that people waver in their commitment to these norms when pressed in specific situations. However, the scope of the evidence is bounded by methodological struggles, so in reality our understanding of current attitudes around democratic norms in the mass public in the United States is limited.

## **2.2 Allegiance to Political Parties**

The next important element in understanding why presidents should be an influential character in shifting attitudes around democratic norms is establishing the allegiance of citizens to political parties. In this section, I show that the members of the two political parties have grown increasingly loyal to their own party and that the two parties are different at their core in a way that sets them up to vary in their allegiance to democratic norms.

To start, the reality of increasing ideological polarization of elites is well-documented (Barber & McCarty 2015). Additionally, the reality of ideological polarization within the mass public has been debated, though there is at least evidence for increased party sorting if it is not ideological polarization (Abramowitz & Saunders 2008, Fiorina et al. 2010). However, affective polarization, or the phenomenon where ordinary Americans dislike and

distrust average Americans of the opposite political party, has steadily been increasing in the United States and is at an all-time high (Abramowitz & Webster 2016, Iyengar & Krupenkin 2018, Iyengar et al. 2019). Additionally, scholars have long shown that voters' allegiance to parties is strong and a consistent indicator of vote choice (Campbell et al. 1960). Combined, all of these facets of partisanship contribute to a reality that party matters a lot to both elites and the public.

In addition to party becoming increasingly important, the two main political parties in the United States are simply *different*. Grossman and Hopkins describe the asymmetry of the American political parties, where the Democratic party is basically a collection of various group interests, and the Republican party is the home for a core conservative ideological movement (Grossman & Hopkins 2016). According to Grossman and Hopkins, these party differences are not just a result of their membership, but also *how* each party operates to get votes, debate issues, and perform other political tasks. Further, Republicans are much more likely than Democrats to score highly on the authoritarian battery (Hetherington & Weiler 2018). Hetherington and Weiler expand on the party differences on the authoritarian battery and name this difference a "fixed versus fluid" mentality; those who score high on the authoritarian battery have a fixed world, and those who score low on the battery have a fluid mentality. This Republican preference for the fixed worldview is also correlated to a preference for a strongman figure, who is more likely to violate democratic norms themselves.

Lastly, the United States is becoming increasingly demographically diverse.<sup>2</sup> Since the Republican party does not appeal to the larger minority populations however, they are struggling to maintain political power with their current policies alone (Bartels 2020, Grossman & Hopkins 2016, Hacker & Pierson 2016). As such, their only solution is to pursue policies that are inherently anti-democratic that unfairly shift the rules of the game in their favor, such as supporting voter suppression efforts as seen in Texas and Georgia, to ensure they win.<sup>3</sup> Because they want to stay part of the winning team, members of the Republican party support these undemocratic efforts.

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<sup>2</sup><https://www.brookings.edu/research/new-census-data-shows-the-nation-is-diversifying-even-faster-than-predicted/>

<sup>3</sup><https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/interactive/2021/voting-restrictions-republicans-states/>

As demonstrated, the Republican party does not have a majority without playing the game in some way, which in this case amounts to undermining democracy by violating democratic norms in an effort to maintain power. This fundamental difference between the parties' treatment of democratic norms puts the future of American democracy at severe risk as long as one of the two major parties actively undermines democracy.

In brief, party loyalty among citizens of both parties has grown very strong, even to the point of citizens supporting their party leaders violating democratic norms in order to retain power.

## **2.3 The Role of Presidents**

Last, I establish why studying U.S. presidents are key actors for understanding the health of U.S. democratic norms. As previously discussed, democratic norms play a key role in maintaining democracy. Naturally, a country's leadership plays an important role in maintaining these norms. However, there has been little discussion of the precise role that U.S. presidents play in maintaining these norms. This lack of discussion is concerning because presidents have distinct influence as the institutional leader of the United States and as the effective leader of their political party. These important components combined lay the ground work for the idea that presidents should be able to have a unique (partisan) influence over democratic norms beyond other elites.

### **2.3.1 Presidential Influence in the U.S.**

For years, scholars agreed that presidents couldn't *change* public opinion, but could raise the *salience* of an issue enough to temporarily change the result in their favor (Canes-Wrone 2006, Kernell 1997, Druckman & Jacobs 2015). However, this model has been challenged when scholars demonstrated just how strong party ID is among individuals. Recent studies have found that voters simply look to party elites on how to vote and then follow accordingly (Achen & Bartels 2016, Lenz 2009, Barber & Pope 2019), even when the information is negative or other co-partisans speak against it (Agadjanian 2021). This turns the demo-

cratic model on its head; instead of a world where elites are responsive to voters, voters are responsive to elites according to partisanship.

The majority of the presidential influence literature focuses on presidential influence over policy; missing from that literature is a discussion of presidential influence on democracy and democratic norms. Since presidents have some policy influence under the right conditions, it's reasonable that they might have influence over democratic norms as well, though this has not been tested. We know that voters have preferences on freedoms in the abstract, but when pressed about an uncomfortable situation or a group of people they don't like, their support for those freedoms drops (McClosky & Brill 1983, Stouffer 1955). This means that presidents could reasonably use one of the strategies of presidential influence to violate democratic norms for their gain.

### **2.3.2 Presidents and the Media**

While presidents choose which topic to put attention on, media plays a role in amplifying the president's message. Previous administrations would use their press room to try to place the emphasis they wanted on relevant stories, and then relied on media outlets to pick it up (Iyengar 2018). Close relationships between the press secretary and White House reporters could increase the chances of favorable coverage, but ultimately what was reported was dictated by journalistic norms to remain fairly objective. In the 1980s and 1990s, cable news networks were founded which allowed citizens to select into slanted news coverage, a trend that continues today (Mitchell et al. 2014). However, the Trump administration completely altered the media-White House relationship to the point that "Fox News had become the propaganda arm of the White House in all but name" (Benkler et al. 2018, 14). In other words, a major news source for many Americans became the mouthpiece for President Trump, a stark contrast to the traditional role of media to be a source of critical commentary.

Some may say this amplification from Fox News was simply because Trump was a Republican and the two shared partisanship. However, Benkler, Faris, and Roberts show that

that same pattern of becoming a presidential mouth-piece is not mirrored on the political left (Benkler et al. 2018). Instead, they show that right-leaning media sites shirked journalistic norms such as objectivity and truth-seeking. Even right-leaning sites that claim to follow journalistic standards, including Fox News and the Daily Caller, rejected those norms, creating an environment in which an entire political side's news sources were not supported by journalistic norms even though they paraded as though they did. Right-leaning sites rejecting journalistic norms has created a world in which citizens who want right-leaning information are given heavy doses of misinformation, which in turn increases their mistrust in mainstream media.

### **2.3.3 Presidents as Unique Actors**

Important to this argument is the fact that presidents are not just another partisan elite with influence. Instead, presidents are unique political actors with institutional and partisan influence beyond any other domestic actor. Institutionally, they are granted certain powers through the office of the president that gives them influence in the aforementioned ways, such as issuing executive orders and vetoing legislation.

Within their political party, presidents are the de-facto party leader. There are other formal party leaders, such as the Speaker of the House or Party Chair, but they do not have the same institutional or symbolic influence as the president. For example, modern presidents use the State of the Union as an opportunity to set the partisan agenda for the next year. The United States is a world leader and, as head of this important country, the president is inherently a global leader (Nye n.d., Diamond 2019).

### **2.3.4 Presidents and Democratic Norms**

U.S. presidents have been *maintaining* democratic norms for years. For example, past presidents have always supported a peaceful transfer of power by not only stepping back but graciously welcoming the new first family into the White House prior to the inauguration. One of the most well-known examples of this peaceful transfer is when President George

H.W. Bush lost to President Bill Clinton after only one term in office and wrote a kind note wishing him the best in the Oval Office. President Bush didn't just leave office without a literal fight, but offered a political foe words of advice, thereby extending an olive branch across political aisles at the end of his term. Another example of presidents maintaining democratic norms is not postponing regular elections, even during times of crisis, such as during the Civil War or World War I and II. Keeping elections regular ensures that neither party is able to postpone an election to extend their tenure, which is a classic move by authoritarian leaders to maintain power (Levitsky & Ziblatt 2018). In contrast, President Trump regularly violated important norms during his four years in office. One of his most egregious violations was resisting a peaceful transfer of power around and after the 2020 election.

There are instances of presidents breaching some democratic norms, but those have historically been isolated incidents during war times. For example, Abraham Lincoln suspended habeus corpus during the Civil War. During World War II, President Roosevelt signed Executive Order 9066, which created the Japanese internment camps and effectively stripped thousands of Japanese-Americans of any due process or fair trial for their effective incarceration. More recently, President George W. Bush signed the Patriot Act, which severely cut into First Amendment rights of citizens and allowed for significant surveillance without needing explicit permission. In short, all of these instances demonstrate presidents violating democratic norms. Whether they were appropriate or not, presidents justified their use because of the crisis situation. Additionally, these breaches did not extend into larger, more egregious violations. In contrast, President Trump's violations have been separate from any foreign conflict and distinctly domestic in nature. This makes his attacks much more serious and dangerous because they are blatant attacks on American democracy.

## **2.4 Conclusion**

In brief, important work on democracy, parties, and presidential influence have set the stage for presidents to take advantage of their tools and influence democratic norms. First,

democratic norms are critical to the health of a democracy, yet their discussion has been limited in the United States. Additionally, members of the two major political parties have grown increasingly loyal to their own, with some citizens comfortable with their party leaders rejecting democratic norms to stay in power. Lastly, presidents have a unique role through their institutional powers granted through the office of the president and as the de-facto leader of their political party. Each of these components are important to understanding how citizens react to presidents of their own party violating democratic norms. In the remainder of this paper, I will show that citizens regularly choose their party and their president over support for these norms.

### 3 Methodology

To test the effect of partisanship on voters' approval of presidential democratic norm violations, I ran an original large- $n$  survey through YouGov, a polling firm that produces high-quality representative samples (Kennedy et al. 2016). The survey was fielded July 24, 2020-July 27, 2020 and interviewed 2,000 survey respondents representative of of the United States population. Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics of the weighted sample. Survey weights are applied to analyses throughout the paper, though results are nearly the same with and without weights. Independent-leaners are grouped with the party to which they lean for the analyses throughout this paper.

The survey included two original survey experiments that forced respondents to make a trade-off between their political party and democracy. After a few warm-up questions, Experiment 1 tested explicit partisanship. Then, after a small set of loosely related questions, Experiment 2 tested implicit partisanship.

In this paper, an *explicit* partisan cue is one that states the party of the president in the hypothetical situation. For example, this would look like “a Democratic president supported  $x$  action.” For the respondent, there is no ambiguity about which political party supported the action. An *implicit* partisan cue is one that does not name the political party of the

president but references a belief set that is regularly attached to that party. This would look like “the president supported a nationwide ban on abortions.” The pro-life position is clearly stated, a belief set regularly attached to the Republican party.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics of Survey Sample

<b>Gender</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Male	48 %
Female	51
Other	1
<b>Party ID</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Democrat	35 %
Republican	27
Independent	28
Other	10
<b>Education</b>	<b>Percent</b>
No high school	7 %
High school graduate	32
Some college	22
2-year	10
4-year degree	18
Post-graduate degree	11

## 4 Study 1: Explicit Partisanship

### 4.1 Study 1 Design

Partisan cues can be expressed in both explicit and implicit ways, and this paper explores the effect of both. First, we will look at how respondents reacted to the explicit partisan cues. To do this, I presented respondents with a series of hypothetical statements in which a U.S. president potentially violates a democratic norm. Afterwards, respondents were asked how democratic they thought this action was and were presented with five response options from “Definitely appropriate” to “Definitely inappropriate.”<sup>4</sup>

As mentioned, respondents were presented with a series of hypothetical presidential action scenarios. In total, there were 13 scenarios across three levels of severity: non-violation, mild violations, and severe violations. All respondents saw all 13 statements (one per page),

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<sup>4</sup>*Question text:* “How appropriate do you think it is within American democracy for the president to [DV fill-in]?” *Response options:* Definitely appropriate, Somewhat appropriate, Neither appropriate nor inappropriate, Somewhat inappropriate, Definitely inappropriate

Table 2: Study 1 Norm Violation Statements

**No Violation**

- Fires the Secretary of Education just two months after he appointed them to serve.
- Revokes a previous president’s policy because he disagrees with it.

**Mild Violation**

- Unilaterally enacts a policy that Congress had already considered and rejected.
- Blocks reporters from coming to White House press briefings because they previously asked the president challenging questions.
- Refuses to allow any notes to be taken at a meeting with the leader of another country.
- Calls a politician of the opposing party “Un-American” for proposing a policy he disagrees with.
- Expresses an interest in staying in office beyond his two allowed terms.

**Severe Violation**

- Directs the government to start regulating media organizations that are critical of his presidency.
- Ignores the Supreme Court’s ruling against one of his actions and continues with his original plan.
- Directs the FBI to investigate his political opponents prior to the upcoming election.
- Orders the Attorney General to not prosecute one of the president’s political allies.
- Refuses to publicly acknowledge he lost the presidential election and will not admit his opponent’s win was legitimate.
- Publicly supports an incident where his supporters punched members of the other party at a political rally.

though the order in which they saw them was randomized. The severity of a violation was not disclosed to the respondent. The complete text of the statements can be found in Table 2.<sup>5</sup> The violations are categorized into levels for the researcher to study whether there is some correlation between the severity of the violation and the willingness to allow it. These levels were created prior to the experiment being run and are based on the theoretical expectations presented in the literature. While not pre-registered, these categorizations were set before the experiment and were not adjusted after seeing the results.

Beyond being exposed to different scenarios of varying violations, a key part of this experiment is to vary the partisanship of the president doing the action. As such, for each scenario respondents were randomly assigned to either a Democratic president, a Republican president, or no partisan identification for the president. This last condition is meant to be as close to a control condition as possible. Varying the party of the president allows us to isolate the effect of having a co-partisan or opposing-partisan president on a respondent’s view of the action.

The focus of this paper is to study the role of *presidential* influence on support for demo-

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<sup>5</sup>The statements in Table 2 are based on academic research that studies democratic norms, both inside and outside of the United States. While there were many sources of inspiration, the main sources were (Levitsky & Ziblatt 2018, Grahan & Svolic 2020, Levitsky & Helmke 2006, Carey et al. 2019).

cratic norm violations. In other words, the actions presented to respondents must be inherently presidential; otherwise, this would simply be a study leadership influence and partisanship. To isolate the presidential effect, the 13 statements used in Study 1 are intentionally items that are uniquely presidential. Firing a cabinet member, using executive orders, and directing the FBI to investigate, for example, are all actions that can only be done by a president. Therefore, we can assume that respondents are reacting to the influence of a partisan *president*, not just partisan leadership generally. However, even if these messages could be sent by any party elite, it is important to study the effect of this messaging coming from the president precisely because of the unique role of the president as previously mentioned.

## 4.2 Study 1 Results

### 4.2.1 Non Democratic Norm Violations

As previously mentioned, the 13 statements are broken into three levels of violations: non-violations, mild violations, and severe violations. The non-violation scenarios asked about the president firing the education secretary from his cabinet and revoking a previous president's policy via unilateral action, neither of which are violations of democratic norms. First, firing the education secretary in general is not a violation of democratic norms because the president is allowed to do so since they are a member of their cabinet. While there may be circumstances in which this action feels more or less appropriate, it is within the president's power to change members of their cabinet, as many presidents have done. Second, revoking a previous president's policy via unilateral action is both legal and a very typical action for presidents to take when they first take office.<sup>6</sup> Most importantly though, neither items undermine the validity of democracy.

Across both statements, Republican respondents think these actions are appropriate within democracy at a higher rate than Democratic respondents do. When Republican respondents are shown a Republican president, about 70% of respondents in both scenarios saw the action as appropriate. When shown a non-partisan president, about 65 percent of

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<sup>6</sup><https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2017/01/23/trump-pledged-to-reverse-obamas-executive-orders-heres-how-well-past-presidents-have-fulfilled-that-pledge/>

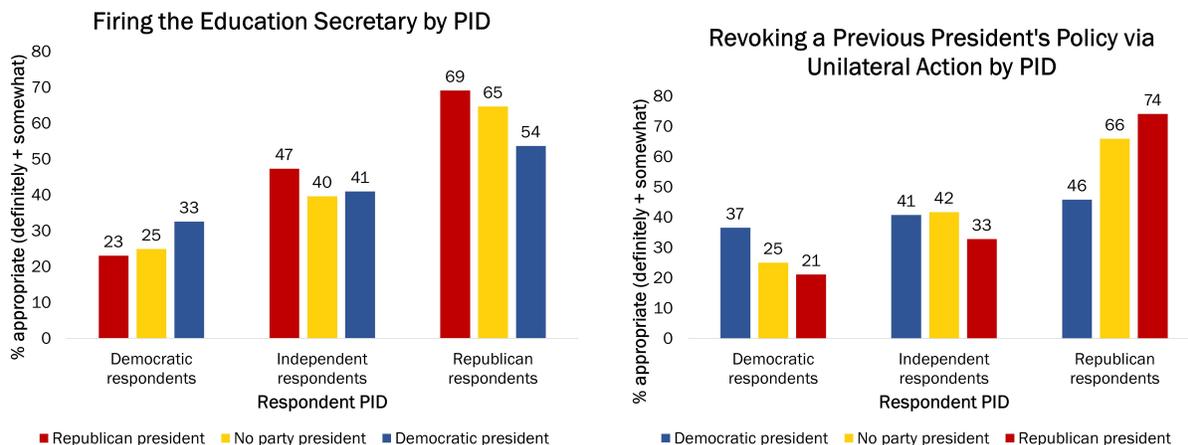


Figure 2: Non Democratic Norm Violations by PartyID

Republican respondents think that action is democratically appropriate. Even when shown a Democratic president, about half of Republican respondents see that action as appropriate.

On the other hand, Democratic respondents generally see these non-violations as democratically appropriate at much lower rates, even when shown a Democratic president. On average, only about 25 percent of Democratic respondents think either firing the education secretary or revoking a previous policy is appropriate within democracy. However, that proportion increases by about 10 percentage points when there is a Democratic president, showing that Democratic respondents are swayed by the party of the president in these situations.

Lastly, we look at Independent respondents. Here and through the remainder of the paper, only pure Independents are included as “Independents.” Independent-leaners are grouped with the party with which they lean. Unsurprisingly, Independent respondents are nearly in between Republican and Democratic respondents. However, their allegiance to a party is not consistent. For example, independent respondents think the Republican president firing the education secretary is the most appropriate scenario among the three parties. At the same time, Independent respondents think the Democratic or non-partisan president revoking a previous president’s order is the most appropriate. We continue to see this non-pattern throughout the conditions, wherein Independent respondents do not respond uniformly.

In brief, among non-violations, both Democratic and Republican respondents think an action is more appropriate if done by a president of their party. Democratic respondents are more reluctant to think an action is appropriate, while a very large proportion of Republican respondents think these actions are appropriate in a democracy.

#### **4.2.2 Mild Democratic Norm Violations**

Next, we look at the reactions to the mild democratic norm violations. While these are “only” mild and not severe violations, they are still violations and should be treated as such. First, respondents generally think that these actions are less appropriate than the non-violations. However, we see a similar pattern as above where Republicans show a higher overall level of support than Democrats for the actions, and Independents are about in between the two parties. In other words, partisanship matters, though on the margin.

To start, about 40 percent of Republicans think it is appropriate for a president to block reporters from White House briefings for asking tough questions when shown a Republican or nonpartisan president. Additionally, about 40 percent of Republicans think it is appropriate for the president to call another politician “un-American” when shown a Republican or nonpartisan president. Among Democratic respondents, there is a dip in the proportion of respondents who think these action are appropriate as compared to the non-violations.

Respondents across both parties are less supportive of presidents doing mild violations than the non-violations. However, Republican respondents think these actions are more appropriate than Democratic respondents. And while overall support drops, a non-zero portion of respondent think these actions are appropriate, which should serve as a warning sign for democracy in America.

Within the mild violations, the parties differ in how affected they are by the explicit presidential partisan cue. When Democrats are presented with democratic norm violations, they are not more likely to support the action from a president of their own party. However, Republican respondents continue to think an action is more appropriate by large margins if the president is a member of their own party. These results present a stark contrast between

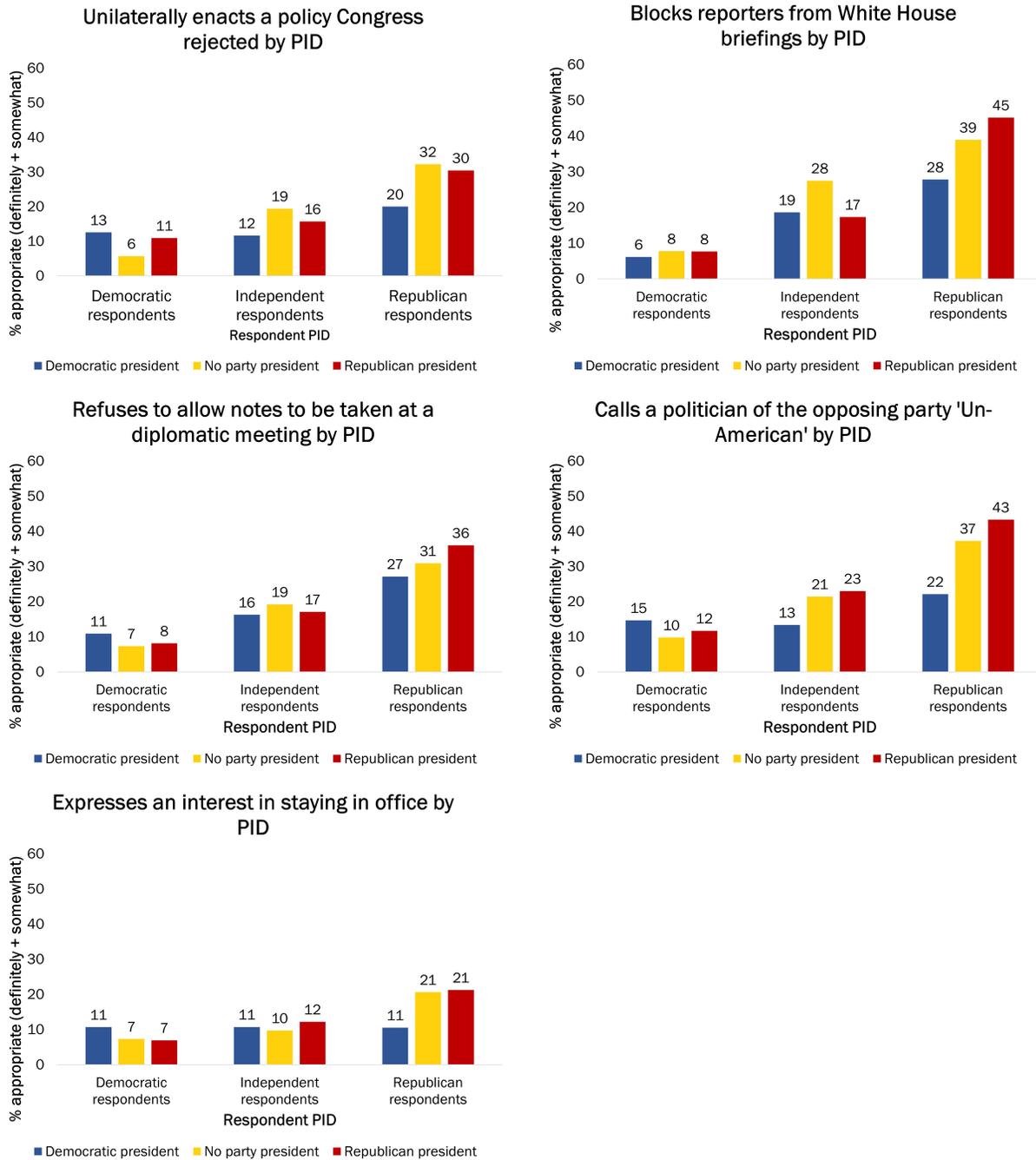


Figure 3: Mild Democratic Norm Violations by PartyID

the two major parties in their commitment to partisanship versus democracy.

Independent respondents support these actions at levels between Democratic and Republican respondents. Similar to the non-violation scenarios, Independent respondents do not react consistently to the mild scenarios however. When asked about unilaterally invoking

a policy Congress already considered and rejected or calling a politician “un-American,” they are least likely to support the Democratic president, and the Republican and no-party president receive similar levels of support. However, when asked about blocking reporters, Independent respondents think it is most appropriate only when an unlabeled president does it. Lastly, there is no difference in appropriateness for Independent respondents when the president refuses to allow notes taken at a meeting or expresses an interest in staying in office longer than his two terms. These differences show that, while Republican and Democratic respondents have allegiance to their respective parties, Independent respondents do not appear to have an allegiance to any one party and their response depends much more on the situation.

#### **4.2.3 Severe Democratic Norm Violations**

Lastly, we examine respondents’ reactions to severe democratic norm violations. All respondents think these actions are less appropriate than the non- or mild violations. However, there are substantive differences in the level of support across members of the two parties. On average, Republican respondents are more than twice as likely to think a severe violation is appropriate as compared to Democratic respondents.

For example, nearly a quarter of Republican respondents think it is appropriate for the president to direct the government to start regulating the media when done by a Republican or non-partisan president. When shown a Democratic president, 15 percent of Republican respondents still think it is appropriate to regulate the media. Additionally, one in five Republican respondents think it would be appropriate for the president to refuse to acknowledge that he lost the presidential election. A free press and free elections are two core components of democracy; learning that a significant portion of respondents from a single party is concerning for America’s democratic health.

Prior to the 2020 general election, President Trump had suggested he might not accept the outcome in the name of voter fraud.<sup>7</sup> As it turns out, President Trump did in fact resist

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<sup>7</sup><https://www.businessinsider.com/trump-suggests-that-he-wont-accept-the-2020-election-results-if-he-loses-2020-7>

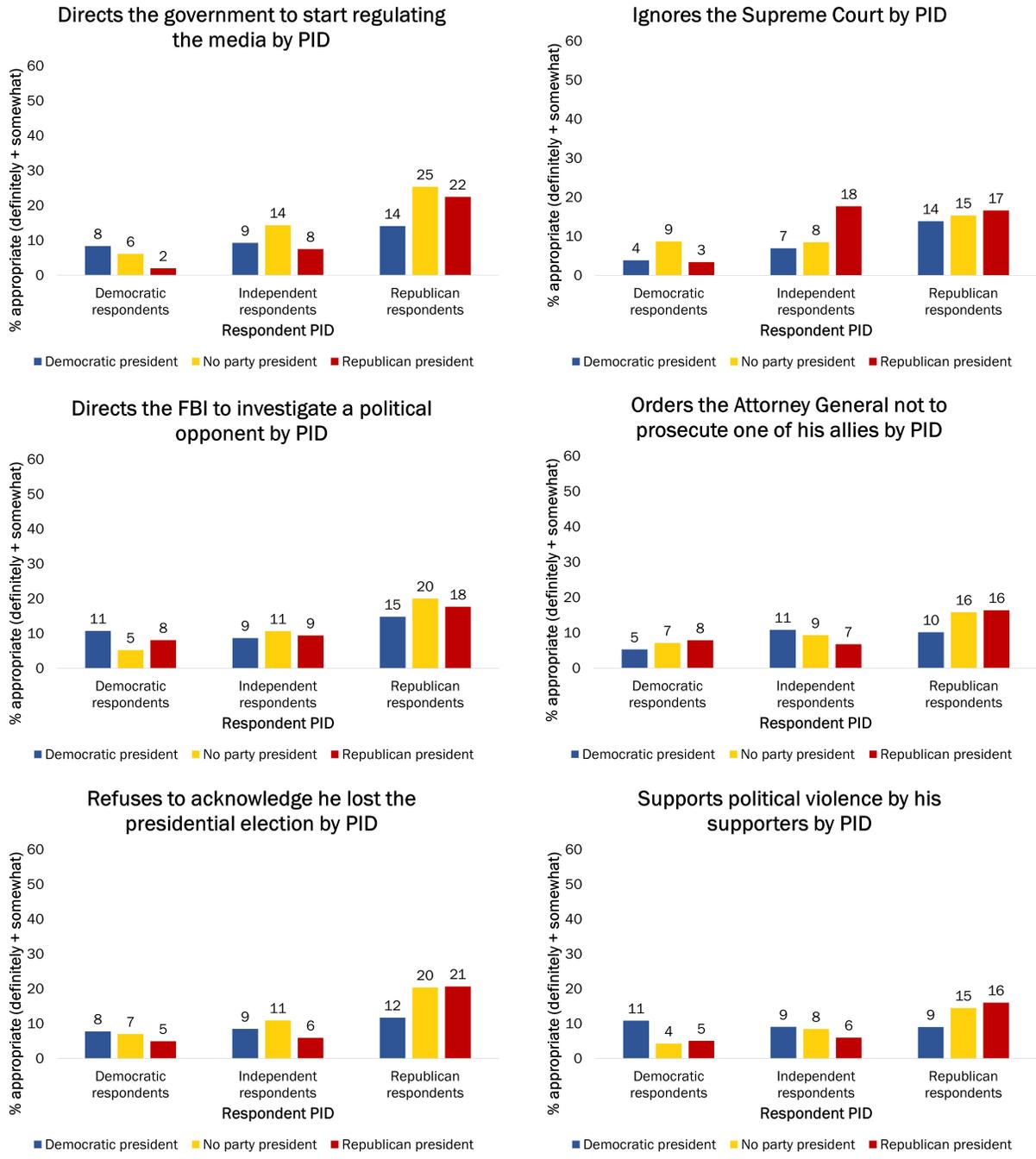


Figure 4: Severe Democratic Norm Violations by PartyID

acknowledging he lost the election. While he eventually allowed the transition to happen<sup>8</sup>, his insistence on the stolen election narrative ultimately led to the January 6 mob at the

<sup>8</sup><https://www.nytimes.com/2020/11/23/us/politics/trump-transition-biden.html>

Capitol.<sup>9</sup> While many were shocked at how the situation in the United States suddenly escalated to the January 6 capitol insurrection, this experiment sheds light on just how attitudes of voters were prepared for that situation. This survey was run in July 2020, four months before the 2020 election. In July 2020, 21 percent of Republicans shown a Republican president believed it was appropriate for a president to refuse to acknowledge he lost the presidential election. In January 2021, 75 percent of people who voted for Trump still believed Trump won the election.<sup>10</sup> 74 million people voted for President Trump. This means that, as of January 2021, about 55.5 million voters did not believe Trump lost the election. From July 2020 to January 2021, Republican propaganda and legal efforts continued to challenge the Biden win. While we regularly see parties persuading voters on policy issues, this Republican persuasion campaign stands out because they were using partisan efforts to convince people that a fair election was stolen. Even with no solid evidence to support that claim, Republicans convinced more than three-quarters of their supporters to think violating democratic norms around elections is appropriate.

### 4.3 Co-partisan Treatment Effect

I estimate the co-partisan treatment effect to learn what is the effect of seeing a statement from a respondent's own party compared to a president of a respondent's opposing party. Empirically, I calculate this by subtracting the percent of respondents who think the action by the president of the opposing party is appropriate from the percent of respondents who think the action by the president of the same party is appropriate. Table ?? presents the results.

$$\text{Copartisan Treatment Effect} = \% \text{ appropriate (co-partisan pres.)} - \% \text{ appropriate (opposing partisan pres.)} \quad (1)$$

The findings show that members of both parties think an action is more appropriate if it comes from a president of their own party. In addition to Republican respondents having a higher threshold for norm violations as previously discussed, the co-partisan treatment

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<sup>9</sup><https://www.nytimes.com/2021/01/06/us/politics/capitol-mob-trump-supporters.html>

<sup>10</sup><https://www.pewresearch.org/politics/2021/01/15/voters-reflections-on-the-2020-election/>

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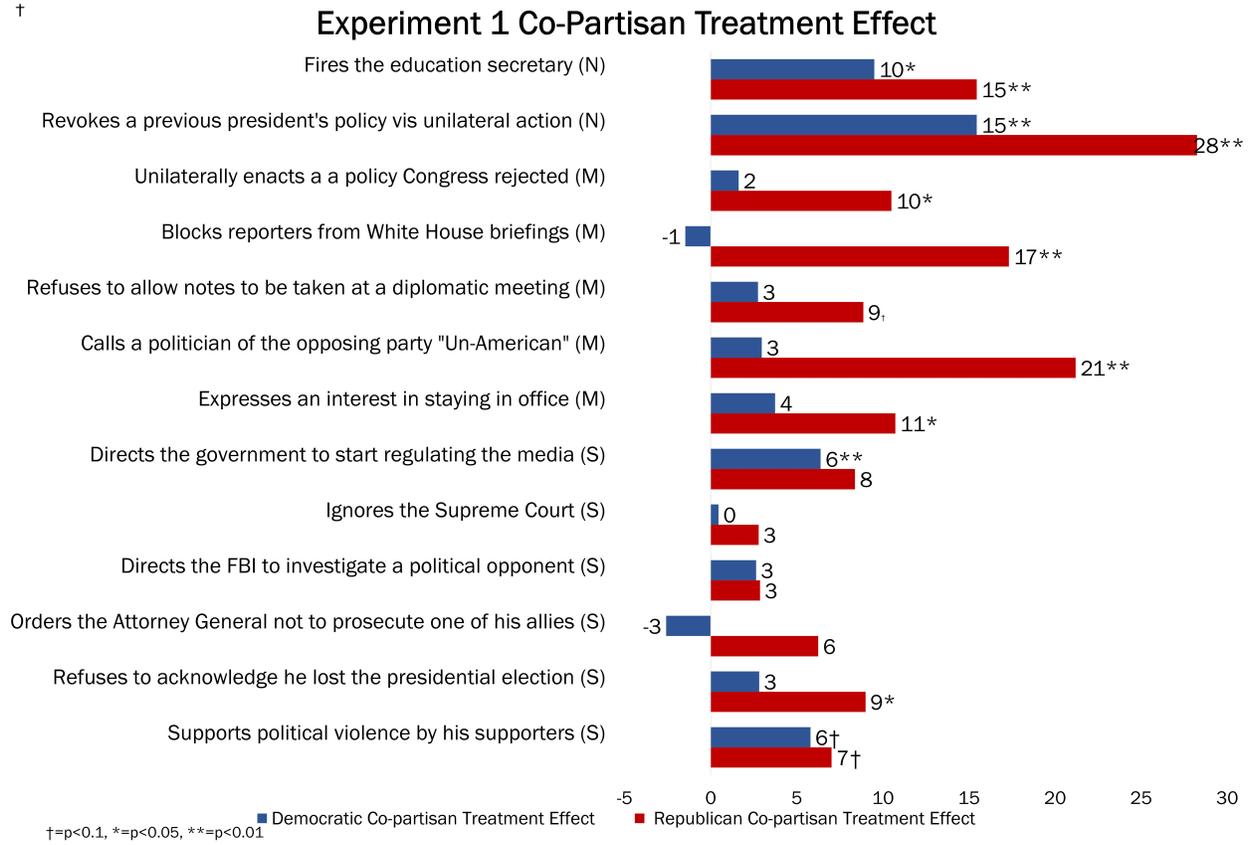


Figure 5: Experiment 1 Co-partisan Treatment Effect

effect is particularly strong among Republican respondents. The strong Republican effect is additional evidence to the fact that members of the Republican and Democratic parties treat democracy very differently. Figure 5 highlights how much party matters to members of the Republican party, even against norm violations.

While respondents of both parties are fairly responsive to the increasingly severe norm violations, they continue to be more likely to support a president of their own party in nearly all scenarios. Even though the co-partisan treatment effect among Democratic respondents is not always statistically significant, the effect is consistently positive. This suggests that, in the aggregate, Democratic respondents are also partial to the president of their party.

As previously mentioned, President Trump motivates this work. To this point, many of the scenarios in which Republican respondents deferred to the co-partisan Republican president are situations that happened during President Trump’s term. For example, President Trump had a very unstable cabinet with members changing constantly<sup>11</sup>, he blocked reporters from White House press events for saying things President Trump did not like<sup>12</sup>, he called politicians of other parties many names including “Un-American”<sup>13</sup>, and he refused to acknowledge the 2020 election results for many months<sup>14</sup>, among other things. Of the 13 scenarios used in the experiment, eight of them were explicitly done by President Trump. Of those eight, seven scenarios produced significant effects among Republican respondents. This study was not designed to determine *why* partisans responded the way they did, so unfortunately we cannot disentangle this correlation between President Trump’s actions and respondents’ approval ratings. Regardless of the why however, this relationships highlights just how much influence presidents have over members of their own party.

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<sup>11</sup><https://www.brookings.edu/research/tracking-turnover-in-the-trump-administration/>

<sup>12</sup>[https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/legal-issues/white-house-suspension-of-reporters-press-credential-at-issue-in-first-a-2020/03/23/1afd54dc-6d26-11ea-a3ec-70d7479d83f0\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/legal-issues/white-house-suspension-of-reporters-press-credential-at-issue-in-first-a-2020/03/23/1afd54dc-6d26-11ea-a3ec-70d7479d83f0_story.html), see also <https://www.cnn.com/2018/11/07/media/trump-cnn-press-conference/index.html>

<sup>13</sup><https://www.bbc.com/news/av/world-us-canada-42954829>

<sup>14</sup><https://www.cnn.com/2021/01/06/trump-vows-not-to-concede-to-biden-at-rally-outside-white-house.html>

Table 3: Experiment 1 Co-Partisan Treatment Effect

Violation	Level	Republican Respondents			Democratic Respondents			R TE- D TE	Average TE	
		% Appropriate R President	% Appropriate D President	Co-partisan TE	% Appropriate D President	% Appropriate R President	Co-partisan TE			
fires the Secretary of Education just two months after he appointed them to serve.	Non	69%	54%	15pp**	33%	23%	10pp*	6pp	12pp	
revokes a previous president's policy because he disagrees with it.	Non	74	46	28**	37	21	15**	13	22	
unilaterally enacts a policy that Congress had already considered and rejected.	Mild	30	20	10*	13	11	2	9	6	
blocks reporters from coming to White House press briefings because they previously asked the president challenging questions.	Mild	45	28	17**	6	8	-1	19	8	
refuses to allow any notes to be taken at a meeting with the leader of another country.	Mild	36	27	9†	11	8	3	6	6	
calls a politician of the opposing party "Un-American" for proposing a policy he disagrees with.	Mild	43	22	21**	15	12	3	18	12	
expresses an interest in staying in office beyond his two allowed terms.	Mild	21	11	11*	11	7	4	7	7	
directs the government to start regulating media organizations that are critical of his presidency.	Severe	22	14	8†	8	2	6**	2	7	
ignores the Supreme Court's ruling against one of his actions and continues with his original plan.	Severe	17	14	3	4	3	0	2	2	
directs the FBI to investigate his political opponents prior to the upcoming election.	Severe	18	15	3	11	8	3	0	3	
orders the Attorney General to not prosecute one of the president's political allies.	Severe	16	10	6	5	8	-3	9	2	
refuses to publicly acknowledge he lost the presidential election and will not admit his opponent's win was legitimate.	Severe	21	12	9*	8	5	3	6	6	
publicly supports an incident where his supporters punched members of the other party at a political rally.	Severe	16	9	7**	11	5	6†	1	6	
				<b>Average Republican Co-partisan Treatment Effect</b>	11pp				<b>Average Democratic Co-partisan Treatment Effect</b>	4pp

† =  $p < 0.1$ , \* =  $p < 0.05$ , \*\* =  $p < 0.01$

#### 4.4 Did the respondents view the violation scenarios with similar severity?

Thus far the paper has shown that members of both parties are more lenient with a president of their own party violating important democratic norms than with a president of the opposing party.

In the survey design and analysis, we grouped the norm violations into three groups by severity. However, in order for our inference about respondents being fairly sensitive to different degrees of violations to be accurate, we need to verify that respondents see the violations in the same thematic way. To answer this question, I order the norm violation statements according to how appropriate the respondents thought the actions were. I do this with both an *overall ranking*, a *within-party ranking* for Republican and Democratic respondents, and a *differences rankings*.

To produce these rankings, I computed the mean level of appropriateness according to respondents for a given violation. First, the overall ranking is the mean level of how appropriate respondents say the action is across all respondents in all experimental conditions. I use all conditions instead of the non-partisan control-like condition because in nearly all situations it functionally performed as a mirror to the Republican president condition.<sup>15</sup> Second, I produce the within-party ranking for Republicans and Democrats by computing the mean level of appropriateness for each action among Republicans when they were shown a Republican president and among Democrats when they were shown a Democratic president. Table 4 presents the results.

##### 4.4.1 Overall and Within-Party Rankings Results

Using the *overall rankings*, we see that respondents categorize the scenarios in the same three thematic categories as I had classified them, which supports the theoretical expectations. Generally, respondents consider non-violations as least problematic, mild violations as more problematic, and severe violations as the most problematic. This result validates the three violation levels as meaningful in the same way to both the researcher and respondents.

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<sup>15</sup>This is likely due to the fact that there was a Republican president in the White House when this experiment was run, so respondents are likely substituting the current president in their mind (President Donald Trump).

Table 4: Experiment 1 Statement Rankings

Violation	Researcher Level	All Respondents			Republican Respondents			Democratic Respondents			Difference Analysis	
		Mean	SD	Ranking	Mean	SD	Ranking	Mean	SD	Ranking	R-D	Ranking
fires the Secretary of Education just two months after he appointed them to serve.	Non	2.69	1.275	1	1.92	1.164	2	2.959	1.25	1	-1.039	9
revokes a previous president’s policy because he disagrees with it.	Non	2.798	1.36	2	1.846	1.035	1	3.018	1.378	2	-1.172	10
unilaterally enacts a policy that Congress had already considered and rejected.	Mild	3.716	1.223	5	3.059	1.249	6	3.875	1.166	3	-0.816	5
blocks reporters from coming to White House press briefings because they previously asked the president challenging questions.	Mild	3.787	1.391	6	2.718	1.379	4	4.476	1.012	12	-1.758	13
refuses to allow any notes to be taken at a meeting with the leader of another country.	Mild	3.708	1.307	4	2.939	1.318	5	4.145	1.138	5	-1.206	11
calls a politician of the opposing party ”Un-American” for proposing a policy he disagrees with.	Mild	3.559	1.334	3	2.685	1.29	3	3.966	1.242	4	-1.281	12
expresses an interest in staying in office beyond his two allowed terms.	Mild	4.059	1.223	7	3.684	1.425	12	4.277	1.178	7	-0.593	3
directs the government to start regulating media organizations that are critical of his presidency.	Severe	4.061	1.213	9	3.427	1.355	7	4.345	1.103	10	-0.918	6
ignores the Supreme Court’s ruling against one of his actions and continues with his original plan.	Severe	4.142	1.163	12	3.539	1.25	9	4.474	0.923	11	-0.935	7
directs the FBI to investigate his political opponents prior to the upcoming election.	Severe	4.11	1.193	10	3.681	1.336	11	4.188	1.231	6	-0.507	1
orders the Attorney General to not prosecute one of the president’s political allies.	Severe	4.059	1.171	8	3.538	1.241	8	4.541	0.945	13	-1.003	8
refuses to publicly acknowledge he lost the presidential election and will not admit his opponent’s win was legitimate.	Severe	4.112	1.174	11	3.67	1.314	10	4.313	1.12	9	-0.643	4
publicly supports an incident where his supporters punched members of the other party at a political rally.	Severe	4.181	1.149	13	3.709	1.306	13	4.292	1.258	8	-0.583	2

Using the *within-party rankings*, we again see that the baseline for what is appropriate or not in democracy is very different between Democrats and Republicans. Republicans see actions performed by a Republican president as much more appropriate than Democrats do with a Democratic president. On a numeric scale of 1-5 with 5 being the most inappropriate, Republicans give what they see as the worst violation a score of 3.7 (supporting political violence), while Democrats give what they see as the worst co-partisan violation a score of 4.5 (ordering the AG to not prosecute an ally).

#### 4.4.2 Differences Rankings Results

Last, I calculate the difference between the within-party rankings for each violation scenario. As mentioned earlier, Democrats and Republicans have different baselines for what is appropriate for a president to do in a democracy. Even though they may have different baselines, members of the two parties could still see the actions as similarly severe relative to the other actions. Thanks to the differing baselines however, it may make it look like one party thinks the actions are more severe than the other. To investigate this possibility, I produce a *difference ranking* by subtracting the within-party rankings from each other (R-D), and then ranking those differences. The results are presented in the final section of Table 4.

On a 1-5 scale, the difference in means between Republican and Democrats ranges from 0.507 to 1.758. If the difference in means in all situations was similar, it would mean the parties view the situations with similar seriousness regardless of baseline values. On the other hand, if the difference in means varies across the situations, it means the two major parties do not view the issues the same. Unfortunately, the latter situation is what we see: the difference in means gets increasingly large as the violations get more severe. On a five-point scale, Republicans and Democrats are almost two scale points apart in the most extreme situations. This increasing difference on the severity of norms means that Democrats see these actions as increasingly extreme, while Republican respondents do not see as much of a difference between many of these actions. In sum, the two parties have fundamentally different views on what is appropriate in a democracy.

Within the violations, Republicans and Democrats agree the most on the most severe norm violations. Both sides agree that directing the FBI and supporting political violence are similarly severe. On the other hand, the most disagreement happens in the non- and moderate violations. For example, Democrats think a co-partisan president blocking reporters from White House briefings was one of the worst offenses and ranked it 12 of 13, while Republicans ranked a co-partisan president doing the same thing as one of the lesser offenses (4 of 13).

#### **4.5 Party Differences**

Throughout Study 1, partisans were more likely to allow a president of their own party to commit a democratic norm violation than a president of the opposing party. However, Republicans and Democrats consistently responded differently beyond preference for partisanship. More Republican respondents were willing to allow a president of any party to commit the norm violations than were Democratic respondents. I refer to this difference as the baseline gap.

For example, in the non-violations section, firing the education secretary and revoking a previous president's executive action are both legal and used by presidents of both political parties regularly. When responding to a president of their own party, about 70 percent of Republican respondents think these actions are appropriate, which makes sense given that these are actions that happen regularly and are legal. However, only about one-third of Democratic respondents think these actions are appropriate when shown a president of their own party. The lack of Democratic support for these actions is shockingly low since these actions are not actually violations of democratic norms.

This baseline gap pattern is also repeated among the mild violations. In some situations, Democratic support is around 10 percent while Republican support is around 40 percent. Even among the severe violations where both parties think the actions are generally less appropriate, there is still a baseline gap between respondents of the two parties. Republican respondent support hovers around 15-20 percent while Democratic respondent support sits between 5-10 percent.

I suggest two possible explanations for the baseline gap. One plausible explanation is that Democrats are reacting strongly against presidential actions because this survey was run during the Trump presidency, during which President Trump regularly violated democratic norms. A replication study during the Biden administration would help investigate this possibility. Another plausible explanation is that members of the two parties have different preferences for a strong executive. Empirically, Republicans score higher on authoritarian battery scales than Democrats, which is also linked to preferences for a strong man leader (Hetherington & Weiler 2018). As such, these predispositions may help explain why Republicans are so much more supportive of these norm violations, even on severe violations.

#### **4.6 Study 1 Conclusion**

Study 1 demonstrates two important facts:

1. While in the aggregate people are fairly sensitive to differences in the severity of democratic norms, both Democratic and Republican respondents often choose their party and their president over support for those norms.
2. Republican and Democratic respondents are fundamentally different. Republicans have a high threshold for democratic norm violations by any president while Democrats are resistant even to democratically appropriate actions by their own president.

### **5 Study 2: Implicit Partisanship**

#### **5.1 Theoretical Motivations**

From Study 1, we see that individuals are more willing to allow a president of their own party to do an undemocratic action than a president from the opposing party. The strength of the partisan effect varies depending on the action itself and how large of a violation it is, but both Democrats and Republicans generally think an action is more democratically appropriate when a president of their party does it, even when it is a violation of democratic norms.

Study 1 tested the reality of explicit partisanship that is our modern political environment, where party labels are obvious and clear for the respondent to engage with. However, there are many political events that happen without party *labels* but where party *messages* are still present. For example, the phrase “Black Lives Matter” has become very politicized along left and right political lines despite the fact that it doesn’t include a party label in it. As such, Study 2 asks, “when partisans cannot rely on party labels, do they still support their party’s ideas?”

In the second study, I leverage an important current political debate: the voting process. On the political right, many are concerned that mail-in ballots increase voter fraud and that mail-in ballots give a political advantage to the political left.<sup>16</sup> On the political left, many are concerned with voter disenfranchisement due to limited access to the polls, specifically from restrictive voter ID laws and a decrease in polling locations in Democratic-strongholds.

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Using the voting process as the topic for this study is important because the use of regular, free, and fair elections is a key part to a functioning democracy. Unfortunately, authoritarian leaders use the cover of an unfair voting process as a reason to postpone the election while having ulterior motives to maintain their power.<sup>18</sup> Even though the president technically doesn’t have power to change Election Day, the president holds special symbolic power unique to his office that could convince Congress to change Election Day. Similar to Study 1’s uniquely presidential items, only a president could call for moving Election Day and expect reasonable success, thus putting the emphasis on *presidential* partisan influence, not general partisan leadership influence. To be clear, both voter fraud and limited voter access are serious issues in the health of a democracy, and valid concerns about them should certainly be addressed. However, the way in which they are wielded as a political talking

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<sup>16</sup>The FBI has said that there is no evidence of widespread corruption efforts through mail-in ballots (<https://www.npr.org/2020/08/26/906262573/theres-no-evidence-supporting-trump-s-mail-ballot-warnings-fbi-says>). Additionally, numerous studies have shown that there vote-in ballots do not advantage the democratic party (See (Barber & Holbein 2020) and (Thompson et al. 2020)).

<sup>17</sup>Thus far, we do not have evidence that voterID laws decrease turnout (Grimmer et al. 2018).

<sup>18</sup>Presidential elections in the United States have never been postponed, even during the Civil War and the Spanish Flu pandemic, both of which were serious disruptors. <https://www.nationalgeographic.com/history/2020/07/united-states-never-delayed-presidential-election-why-tricky/close>

point can make them dangerous tools in the destruction of democracy.

## 5.2 A Design to Test Implicit Partisanship

To test this question, I designed a 2x2 survey experiment that presented respondents with a hypothetical scenario where the president suggests postponing the election. In this experiment, half of the respondents were randomly assigned either the Democratic reason (lack of voter access) or the Republican reason (voter fraud). Additionally, half were told the party of the president suggesting the activity. This design is important because it gives respondents the opportunity to show their support for their party’s belief sets without the attached identity labels.

In the experiment, respondents were told, “Now, we have another hypothetical scenario we’d like you to consider.” Below that statement, they then were shown one of the four statements presented in Table 5. Afterwards, they were asked whether they supported or opposed postponing the election, and were presented with a five-point response scale from “Strongly support” to “Strongly oppose.”<sup>19</sup>

In the introduction of this paper, I referenced President Trump’s tweet from July 30, 2020 that openly suggested we should delay the election for reasons related to election integrity. Notably, the explicit Republican condition for Study 2 is almost nearly identical to President Trump’s tweet. While I can’t speak to how people reacted *after* President Trump tweeted about postponing the election, I can verify that these results are not contaminated by that tweet because they were collected *before*. And, even though these results cannot speak perfectly to how people responded after President Trump tweeted, they may offer some insight into general trends in response to the tweet.

## 5.3 Study 2 Results: Reactions to Implicit Partisanship Cues

Figure 6 presents the results from Study 2 broken down by respondent PID. The x-axis presents the respondent PID, the y-axis is the percent of respondents who support postponing

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<sup>19</sup>Response options: Strongly support, Somewhat support, Neither support nor oppose, Somewhat oppose, Strongly oppose

Table 5: Implicit Partisanship Survey Experiment Condition Text

<b>Party Reasoning</b>	<b>Party Label?</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Experiment Text</b>
Democrat	Yes	480	Imagine a Democratic president says that the upcoming presidential election should be postponed until all eligible citizens have access to a polling station.
Democrat	No	506	Imagine a president says that the upcoming presidential election should be postponed until all eligible citizens have access to a polling station.
Republican	Yes	504	Imagine a Republican president says that the upcoming presidential election should be postponed until all voter fraud can be eliminated.
Republican	No	509	Imagine a president says that the upcoming presidential election should be postponed until all voter fraud can be eliminated.

the election, and the different bars represent the experimental conditions.

Explicit partisan labels make respondents of the two major parties more likely to support the norm violation than implicit partisan labels. As might be expected, respondents are most likely to support the measure if it is a labeled co-partisan idea, then next most likely to support the measure if it is an unlabeled co-partisan idea, and then least likely to support an idea of the opposing party, labeled or unlabeled.

Among Republican respondents, 54 percent would support postponing the election if a Republican president said it should be postponed in the name of voter fraud. Among Democratic respondents, 36 percent would support postponing the election if a Democratic president suggested it in the name of voter access. While not as high as support levels among Republicans percentage-wise, Democratic support levels double when the Democratic idea has the Democratic label on it. On the one hand, the average level of support for postponing the election is much lower among Democrats than among Republicans. However, the absolute difference between the labeled Republican condition and labeled Democratic condition for Democratic and Republican respondents is nearly the same; members of both parties rely on explicit party cues.

Among the implicit statements, both Democrats and Republicans are slightly more likely to support their own party’s proposal than the other part’s proposal. This suggests that partisans may vaguely recognize their own party’s reasoning more, but not enough to support

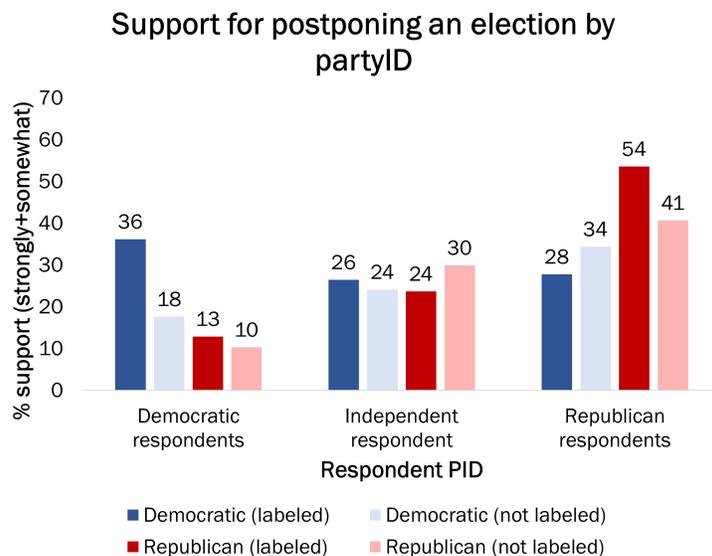


Figure 6: Support for postponing an election by PartyID

it.

Independent respondents present an interesting case here.<sup>20</sup> Unlike partisan respondents, they are no more or less likely to support postponing the election based on a party idea regardless of which party. Instead, about a quarter of Independent respondents support postponing the election across all conditions. On the one hand, this cements their identity as true Independents. On the other hand, one in four Independents would support postponing an election regardless of who was president. This serves as a warning sign to the commitment to democratic norms among the public beyond members of the two major parties.

We next look at the experimental results by Trump approval in Figure 7. At the beginning of the survey, respondents were asked if they approve or disapprove of President Trump’s handling of his job as president and were given five response options from “Strongly approve” to “Strongly disapprove.” Respondents are coded as approving if they responded that they either strongly approve or somewhat approve, and not approving if they answered otherwise. Unsurprisingly, these results largely mirror the results when the respondents were broken down by Party ID. Generally, those who approve of President Trump respond similarly to Republican respondents, and those who disapprove of President Trump respond similarly to

<sup>20</sup>Only pure Independents are included here. Independent-leaners are included with the party to which they lean.

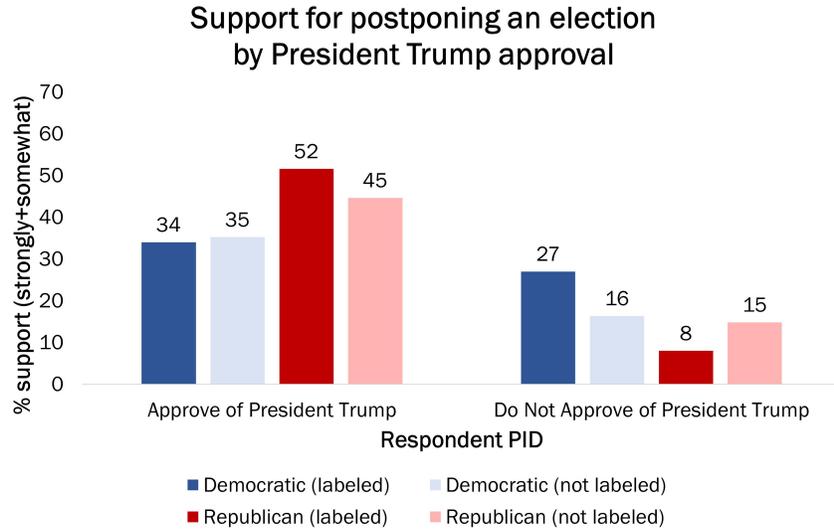


Figure 7: Support for postponing an election by approval of President Trump

Democratic respondents.

Lastly, I asked respondents how important it is to them that people know they are a Republican or Democrat.<sup>21</sup> The idea behind this question is that people who care a lot about others knowing about their party identification are probably more likely to be aware of their party's positions in order to defend their party position. In some ways, we might think of these individuals as the core of the party. I'll refer to them as *Public Republicans* or *Public Democrats*.

Public partisans, or those who say that party reputation is very important to themselves, are more likely to support a call to postpone the election from a president from their party than members of their party as a whole (Figure 8). Public Republicans support the non-labeled Republican argument at effectively the same rate as the labeled Republican argument. Public Republicans are also the only group that responded to the labeled and unlabeled conditions at the same (high) rates. Support from Public Democrats is still driven by the party labeling, though their level of support is higher than Democratic respondents overall. Again we see that Republican and Democratic respondents are very different, even within this more public-facing group.

<sup>21</sup>Independents were not asked this question.

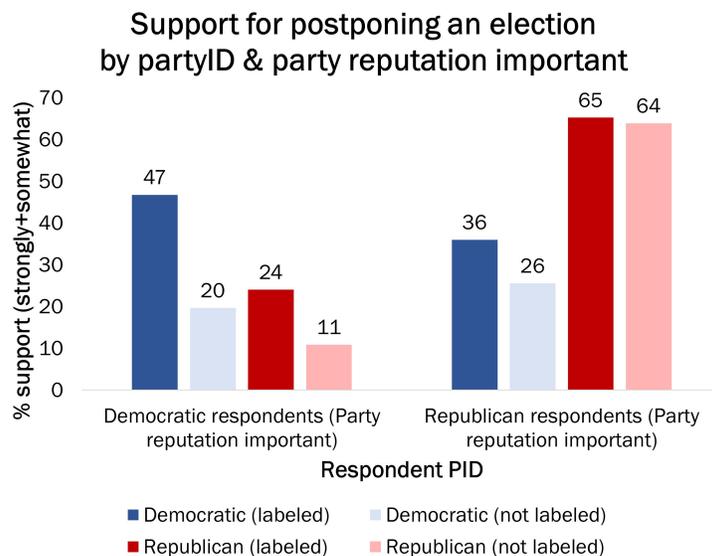


Figure 8: Support for postponing an election by party reputation importance

## 5.4 Study 2 Conclusion

From Study 2, we learn three new facts:

1. Partisan respondents are less likely to support partisan actions from the president when the party of the president is not labeled than when the party of the president is labeled. This finding is very important for understanding how citizens intake partisan arguments. Presidents have strong leverage when they use their party label, and they are much less persuasive when they do not. More broadly, Study 2 shows how citizens react when belief sets and identities are separated.
2. Like in Study 1, we see that respondents in both parties are significantly more likely to think a president's action is appropriate if the president is a member of their party. They are also significantly less likely to think a president's action is appropriate if the president is not a member of their party.
3. Republican and Democratic respondents treat democracy very differently. Republican respondents are much more tolerant of democratic norm violations than Democratic respondents, even when taking into implicit and explicit partisan cues.

## 6 Discussion

In this paper, I demonstrate the influence presidents can have over democratic norms when they leverage their party identity to their supporters. While in the aggregate people are fairly sensitive to differences in the severity of democratic norms, members of both parties often choose their party and their president over support for those norms. Additionally, members of the Democratic and Republican parties are simply *different*. Republican respondents have a much higher tolerance for norm violations, and Democratic respondents are resistant to even democratically-appropriate presidential actions.

In Study 1, we see that, across a wide variety of scenarios, both Democratic and Republican respondents are more likely to support a president of their own party violating a democratic norm than a president of the opposing party. Additionally, we see that Republican respondents think democratic norm violations are appropriate at a much higher rate than Democratic respondents.

Study 2 shows that voters are significantly more likely to support a presidential proposal for postponing the election if the president doing it is labeled as a co-partisan. When the same idea is presented without a partisan label however, support significantly drops. Republicans who care that other people know they are a Republican are an exception to this trend; they recognize the labeled and unlabeled party idea at the same rate.

An interesting follow-up question from Study 2 is to understand whether voters *cannot* or *choose not* to select the partisan reasoning when it does not have its partisan label. On the one hand, it is very likely that voters simply cannot choose the partisan argument without the label because they rely on partisan cues to follow the leader. On the other hand, it is possible that there are voters who choose to select the party idea only when it's labeled in order to appear consistent with the party when it counts, not because they are unaware of the partisan arguments. Unfortunately, this study cannot disentangle these arguments; nonetheless it is an important question to study further to better understand the role of presidential partisan signaling in citizen decision-making.

An overarching question that persists is why Democratic and Republican respondents are so different. Members of one party allow the president to get away with some significant breaches of democracy, while members of the other party are resistant to any presidential action, even very legal and appropriate ones. This paper is not designed to answer this question, but should serve as a warning sign for American democracy and the influence presidents can wield.

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## 7 Appendix

Table A1: Experiment 1: Fires education secretary just two months after he appointed them to serve (Non-Violation)

	Binary DV ATE			Binary DV with Controls			Full DV ATE			Full DV with Controls		
	D	R	I	D	R	I	D	R	I	D	R	I
Republican president	-0.02 (0.04)	0.04 (0.06)	0.08 (0.06)	-0.02 (0.04)	0.03 (0.05)	0.06 (0.05)	0.10 (0.12)	-0.08 (0.14)	-0.21 (0.14)	0.10 (0.11)	-0.09 (0.11)	-0.14 (0.11)
Democratic president	0.08 (0.04)	-0.11 (0.06)	0.01 (0.06)	0.08* (0.04)	-0.16** (0.05)	0.00 (0.05)	-0.23 (0.12)	0.32* (0.13)	-0.09 (0.15)	-0.26* (0.12)	0.43*** (0.12)	-0.03 (0.13)
Constant	0.25*** (0.03)	0.65*** (0.04)	0.40*** (0.04)	0.60*** (0.16)	0.50** (0.18)	0.53*** (0.12)	3.19*** (0.08)	2.00*** (0.08)	2.72*** (0.10)	1.90*** (0.43)	2.02*** (0.38)	2.70*** (0.39)
Controls	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
R-squared	0.009	0.018	0.005	0.101	0.222	0.262	0.012	0.022	0.005	0.152	0.318	0.323
DF	718	503	581	704	488	561	718	503	581	704	488	561

Standard errors in parentheses

Controls: gender, race, constitutional knowledge, Trump approval, education, age. Models run by PartyID of respondent. D/R/I at column heads indicate Democratic respondents, Republican respondents, and Independent respondents. Independent-leaners are grouped with the party they lean towards. This table presents estimates using both the full, five-point dependent variable and a binary version of that same variable. Respondents were asked *How appropriate do you think it is within American democracy for the president to [action]?* DV Response options: *Definitely appropriate, somewhat appropriate, neither appropriate nor innappropriate, somewhat innappropriate, definitely innappropriate*. Full DV models use all five points. Binary DV models code definitely or somewhat appropriate as a 1 and the other response options as a 0, so can be interpreted as whether or not the respondent thought the action was appropriate in a democracy. Baseline category for experiment: president without any party label. Graphs in the paper present estimates from the Binary DV ATE (no controls) models.

\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$

Table A2: Experiment 1: Revokes a previous president's policy because he disagrees with it (Non-Violation)

	Binary DV ATE			Binary DV with Controls			Full DV ATE			Full DV with Controls		
	D	R	I	D	R	I	D	R	I	D	R	I
Republican president	-0.04 (0.04)	0.08 (0.05)	-0.09 (0.06)	-0.06 (0.04)	0.07 (0.05)	-0.07 (0.05)	0.12 (0.15)	-0.13 (0.12)	0.28 (0.16)	0.18 (0.13)	-0.12 (0.10)	0.24 (0.12)
Democratic president	0.12* (0.05)	-0.20*** (0.06)	-0.01 (0.05)	0.12** (0.04)	-0.19*** (0.05)	-0.01 (0.05)	-0.34* (0.15)	0.60*** (0.15)	0.08 (0.15)	-0.39** (0.13)	0.57*** (0.13)	0.08 (0.13)
Constant	0.25*** (0.03)	0.66*** (0.04)	0.42*** (0.04)	0.68*** (0.16)	0.55*** (0.15)	0.44*** (0.12)	3.36*** (0.11)	1.98*** (0.09)	2.64*** (0.11)	1.58** (0.54)	1.91*** (0.33)	2.21*** (0.39)
Controls	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
R-squared	0.022	0.059	0.006	0.134	0.227	0.247	0.021	0.071	0.008	0.178	0.280	0.261
DF	718	503	580	704	488	560	718	503	580	704	488	560

Standard errors in parentheses

Controls: gender, race, constitutional knowledge, Trump approval, education, age. Models run by PartyID of respondent. D/R/I at column heads indicate Democratic respondents, Republican respondents, and Independent respondents. Independent-leaners are grouped with the party they lean towards. This table presents estimates using both the full, five-point dependent variable and a binary version of that same variable. Respondents were asked *How appropriate do you think it is within American democracy for the president to [action]?* DV Response options: *Definitely appropriate, somewhat appropriate, neither appropriate nor innappropriate, somewhat innappropriate, definitely innappropriate*. Full DV models use all five points. Binary DV models code definitely or somewhat appropriate as a 1 and the other response options as a 0, so can be interpreted as whether or not the respondent thought the action was appropriate in a democracy. Baseline category for experiment: president without any party label. Graphs in the paper present estimates from the Binary DV ATE (no controls) models.

\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$

Table A3: Experiment 1: Unilaterally enacts a policy that Congress had already considered and rejected (Mild Violation)

	Binary DV ATE			Binary DV with Controls			Full DV ATE			Full DV with Controls		
	D	R	I	D	R	I	D	R	I	D	R	I
Republican president	0.05 (0.04)	-0.02 (0.05)	-0.04 (0.05)	0.02 (0.02)	0.00 (0.05)	-0.02 (0.04)	-0.22 (0.15)	-0.06 (0.15)	0.12 (0.14)	-0.04 (0.09)	-0.10 (0.13)	0.10 (0.11)
Democratic president	0.07* (0.03)	-0.12* (0.05)	-0.08 (0.04)	0.03 (0.03)	-0.12* (0.05)	-0.07 (0.04)	-0.46*** (0.11)	0.43** (0.15)	0.31* (0.14)	-0.30** (0.10)	0.45** (0.14)	0.30* (0.12)
Constant	0.06*** (0.02)	0.32*** (0.04)	0.19*** (0.04)	0.89*** (0.14)	0.57*** (0.16)	0.45*** (0.11)	4.34*** (0.07)	3.12*** (0.11)	3.56*** (0.11)	0.95* (0.42)	2.36*** (0.35)	1.99*** (0.33)
Controls	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
R-squared	0.009	0.014	0.008	0.282	0.081	0.154	0.026	0.028	0.012	0.325	0.149	0.262
DF	718	503	581	704	488	561	718	503	581	704	488	561

Standard errors in parentheses

Controls: gender, race, constitutional knowledge, Trump approval, education, age. Models run by PartyID of respondent. D/R/I at column heads indicate Democratic respondents, Republican respondents, and Independent respondents. Independent-leaners are grouped with the party they lean towards. This table presents estimates using both the full, five-point dependent variable and a binary version of that same variable. Respondents were asked *How appropriate do you think it is within American democracy for the president to [action]?* DV Response options: *Definitely appropriate, somewhat appropriate, neither appropriate nor innappropriate, somewhat innappropriate, definitely innappropriate*. Full DV models use all five points. Binary DV models code definitely or somewhat appropriate as a 1 and the other response options as a 0, so can be interpreted as whether or not the respondent thought the action was appropriate in a democracy. Baseline category for experiment: president without any party label. Graphs in the paper present estimates from the Binary DV ATE (no controls) models.

\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$

Table A4: Experiment 1: Blocks reporters from coming to White House press briefings because they previously asked the president challenging questions (Mild Violation)

	Binary DV ATE			Binary DV with Controls			Full DV ATE			Full DV with Controls		
	D	R	I	D	R	I	D	R	I	D	R	I
Republican president	0.07 (0.04)	0.03 (0.06)	-0.05 (0.05)	0.04 (0.02)	0.04 (0.05)	-0.04 (0.04)	-0.32* (0.15)	-0.13 (0.16)	0.13 (0.18)	-0.13 (0.09)	-0.14 (0.15)	0.08 (0.12)
Democratic president	0.02 (0.02)	0.02 (0.06)	-0.03 (0.05)	-0.02 (0.02)	0.02 (0.05)	-0.04 (0.04)	-0.16 (0.10)	-0.17 (0.16)	0.13 (0.16)	0.00 (0.09)	-0.15 (0.15)	0.14 (0.12)
Constant	0.04** (0.01)	0.35*** (0.04)	0.24*** (0.04)	0.81*** (0.14)	0.51*** (0.15)	0.82*** (0.16)	4.62*** (0.06)	3.10*** (0.11)	3.67*** (0.13)	0.66 (0.40)	2.07*** (0.37)	1.11* (0.48)
Controls	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
R-squared	0.014	0.001	0.003	0.274	0.096	0.277	0.015	0.003	0.002	0.410	0.150	0.446
DF	718	503	581	704	488	561	718	503	581	704	488	561

Standard errors in parentheses

Controls: gender, race, constitutional knowledge, Trump approval, education, age. Models run by PartyID of respondent. D/R/I at column heads indicate Democratic respondents, Republican respondents, and Independent respondents. Independent-leaners are grouped with the party they lean towards. This table presents estimates using both the full, five-point dependent variable and a binary version of that same variable. Respondents were asked *How appropriate do you think it is within American democracy for the president to [action]?* DV Response options: *Definitely appropriate, somewhat appropriate, neither appropriate nor innappropriate, somewhat innappropriate, definitely innappropriate*. Full DV models use all five points. Binary DV models code definitely or somewhat appropriate as a 1 and the other response options as a 0, so can be interpreted as whether or not the respondent thought the action was appropriate in a democracy. Baseline category for experiment: president without any party label. Graphs in the paper present estimates from the Binary DV ATE (no controls) models.

\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$

Table A5: Experiment 1: Refuses to allow any notes to be taken at a meeting with the leader of another country (Mild Violation)

	Binary DV ATE			Binary DV with Controls			Full DV ATE			Full DV with Controls		
	D	R	I	D	R	I	D	R	I	D	R	I
Republican president	0.01 (0.03)	0.05 (0.05)	-0.02 (0.04)	0.01 (0.03)	0.06 (0.05)	-0.03 (0.04)	0.05 (0.13)	0.01 (0.14)	0.03 (0.15)	0.02 (0.12)	-0.00 (0.14)	0.04 (0.12)
Democratic president	0.04 (0.03)	-0.04 (0.05)	-0.03 (0.04)	0.04 (0.03)	-0.04 (0.05)	-0.04 (0.04)	-0.18 (0.11)	0.51*** (0.15)	0.16 (0.15)	-0.21* (0.10)	0.50*** (0.15)	0.19 (0.13)
Constant	0.07*** (0.02)	0.31*** (0.04)	0.19*** (0.03)	0.64*** (0.15)	0.43** (0.16)	0.53*** (0.10)	4.32*** (0.08)	2.93*** (0.10)	3.58*** (0.11)	1.24* (0.52)	2.33*** (0.37)	1.81*** (0.30)
Controls	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
R-squared	0.003	0.006	0.001	0.155	0.074	0.206	0.008	0.032	0.003	0.256	0.110	0.315
DF	718	503	581	704	488	561	718	503	581	704	488	561

Standard errors in parentheses

Controls: gender, race, constitutional knowledge, Trump approval, education, age. Models run by PartyID of respondent. D/R/I at column heads indicate Democratic respondents, Republican respondents, and Independent respondents. Independent-leaners are grouped with the party they lean towards. This table presents estimates using both the full, five-point dependent variable and a binary version of that same variable. Respondents were asked *How appropriate do you think it is within American democracy for the president to [action]?* DV Response options: *Definitely appropriate, somewhat appropriate, neither appropriate nor innappropriate, somewhat innappropriate, definitely innappropriate*. Full DV models use all five points. Binary DV models code definitely or somewhat appropriate as a 1 and the other response options as a 0, so can be interpreted as whether or not the respondent thought the action was appropriate in a democracy. Baseline category for experiment: president without any party label. Graphs in the paper present estimates from the Binary DV ATE (no controls) models.

\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$

Table A6: Experiment 1: Calls a politician of the opposing party Un-American for proposing apolicy he disagrees with (Mild Violation)

	Binary DV ATE			Binary DV with Controls			Full DV ATE			Full DV with Controls		
	D	R	I	D	R	I	D	R	I	D	R	I
Republican president	0.02 (0.04)	0.06 (0.06)	0.02 (0.05)	0.01 (0.03)	0.07 (0.05)	-0.01 (0.04)	-0.12 (0.14)	-0.14 (0.15)	-0.10 (0.16)	-0.07 (0.12)	-0.19 (0.14)	-0.03 (0.13)
Democratic president	0.05 (0.03)	-0.15** (0.05)	-0.08 (0.04)	0.05 (0.03)	-0.16** (0.05)	-0.06 (0.04)	-0.21 (0.12)	0.58*** (0.15)	0.21 (0.15)	-0.23 (0.12)	0.57*** (0.15)	0.10 (0.13)
Constant	0.10*** (0.02)	0.37*** (0.04)	0.21*** (0.03)	0.70*** (0.16)	0.30* (0.14)	0.43*** (0.10)	4.17*** (0.08)	2.83*** (0.10)	3.49*** (0.11)	1.50** (0.56)	2.21*** (0.36)	2.37*** (0.35)
Controls	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
R-squared	0.004	0.034	0.011	0.108	0.107	0.150	0.005	0.053	0.009	0.158	0.162	0.270
DF	718	503	581	704	488	561	718	503	581	704	488	561

Standard errors in parentheses

Controls: gender, race, constitutional knowledge, Trump approval, education, age. Models run by PartyID of respondent. D/R/I at column heads indicate Democratic respondents, Republican respondents, and Independent respondents. Independent-leaners are grouped with the party they lean towards. This table presents estimates using both the full, five-point dependent variable and a binary version of that same variable. Respondents were asked *How appropriate do you think it is within American democracy for the president to [action]?* DV Response options: *Definitely appropriate, somewhat appropriate, neither appropriate nor innappropriate, somewhat innappropriate, definitely innappropriate*. Full DV models use all five points. Binary DV models code definitely or somewhat appropriate as a 1 and the other response options as a 0, so can be interpreted as whether or not the respondent thought the action was appropriate in a democracy. Baseline category for experiment: president without any party label. Graphs in the paper present estimates from the Binary DV ATE (no controls) models.

\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$

Table A7: Experiment 1: Expresses an interest in staying in office beyond his two allowed terms (Mild Violation)

	Binary DV ATE			Binary DV with Controls			Full DV ATE			Full DV with Controls		
	D	R	I	D	R	I	D	R	I	D	R	I
Republican president	-0.00 (0.03)	0.01 (0.05)	0.02 (0.04)	-0.01 (0.03)	0.02 (0.05)	0.03 (0.04)	0.08 (0.13)	0.08 (0.17)	-0.05 (0.14)	0.10 (0.11)	0.03 (0.16)	-0.07 (0.12)
Democratic president	0.03 (0.03)	-0.10* (0.04)	0.01 (0.04)	0.04 (0.03)	-0.08* (0.04)	-0.00 (0.04)	-0.01 (0.12)	0.54*** (0.15)	-0.07 (0.14)	-0.03 (0.10)	0.46*** (0.14)	0.00 (0.12)
Constant	0.07*** (0.02)	0.21*** (0.03)	0.10*** (0.02)	0.56*** (0.15)	0.30** (0.11)	0.42** (0.14)	4.28*** (0.08)	3.60*** (0.12)	4.11*** (0.09)	1.63** (0.53)	2.52*** (0.39)	2.44*** (0.45)
Controls	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
R-squared	0.004	0.018	0.001	0.155	0.128	0.109	0.001	0.032	0.001	0.216	0.166	0.207
DF	718	503	580	704	488	560	718	503	580	704	488	560

Standard errors in parentheses

Controls: gender, race, constitutional knowledge, Trump approval, education, age. Models run by PartyID of respondent. D/R/I at column heads indicate Democratic respondents, Republican respondents, and Independent respondents. Independent-leaners are grouped with the party they lean towards. This table presents estimates using both the full, five-point dependent variable and a binary version of that same variable. Respondents were asked *How appropriate do you think it is within American democracy for the president to [action]?* DV Response options: *Definitely appropriate, somewhat appropriate, neither appropriate nor innappropriate, somewhat innappropriate, definitely innappropriate*. Full DV models use all five points. Binary DV models code definitely or somewhat appropriate as a 1 and the other response options as a 0, so can be interpreted as whether or not the respondent thought the action was appropriate in a democracy. Baseline category for experiment: president without any party label. Graphs in the paper present estimates from the Binary DV ATE (no controls) models.

\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$

Table A8: Experiment 1: Directs the government to start regulating media organizations that are critical of his presidency (Severe Violation)

	Binary DV ATE			Binary DV with Controls			Full DV ATE			Full DV with Controls		
	D	R	I	D	R	I	D	R	I	D	R	I
Republican president	-0.04 (0.03)	-0.03 (0.05)	-0.04 (0.04)	-0.06* (0.03)	-0.03 (0.05)	-0.02 (0.04)	0.03 (0.12)	0.09 (0.16)	0.23 (0.16)	0.15 (0.11)	0.08 (0.15)	0.14 (0.13)
Democratic president	0.02 (0.03)	-0.11* (0.05)	-0.05 (0.04)	0.02 (0.02)	-0.12** (0.04)	-0.03 (0.04)	-0.20 (0.13)	0.49*** (0.15)	0.38* (0.15)	-0.13 (0.10)	0.54*** (0.14)	0.28* (0.12)
Constant	0.06* (0.02)	0.25*** (0.03)	0.14*** (0.03)	0.52*** (0.14)	0.38*** (0.11)	0.45*** (0.11)	4.55*** (0.10)	3.33*** (0.11)	3.90*** (0.12)	1.76*** (0.52)	2.08*** (0.36)	2.14*** (0.28)
Controls	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
R-squared	0.013	0.015	0.004	0.191	0.109	0.154	0.011	0.028	0.016	0.316	0.192	0.292
DF	718	503	581	704	488	561	718	503	581	704	488	561

Standard errors in parentheses

Controls: gender, race, constitutional knowledge, Trump approval, education, age. Models run by PartyID of respondent. D/R/I at column heads indicate Democratic respondents, Republican respondents, and Independent respondents. Independent-leaners are grouped with the party they lean towards. This table presents estimates using both the full, five-point dependent variable and a binary version of that same variable. Respondents were asked *How appropriate do you think it is within American democracy for the president to [action]?* DV Response options: *Definitely appropriate, somewhat appropriate, neither appropriate nor innappropriate, somewhat innappropriate, definitely innappropriate*. Full DV models use all five points. Binary DV models code definitely or somewhat appropriate as a 1 and the other response options as a 0, so can be interpreted as whether or not the respondent thought the action was appropriate in a democracy. Baseline category for experiment: president without any party label. Graphs in the paper present estimates from the Binary DV ATE (no controls) models.

\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$

Table A9: Experiment 1: Ignores the Supreme Court’s ruling against one of his actions and continues with his original plan (Severe Violation)

	Binary DV ATE			Binary DV with Controls			Full DV ATE			Full DV with Controls		
	D	R	I	D	R	I	D	R	I	D	R	I
Republican president	-0.05 (0.03)	0.01 (0.05)	0.09* (0.04)	-0.06* (0.02)	0.03 (0.04)	0.07 (0.04)	0.25* (0.12)	-0.06 (0.16)	-0.34* (0.15)	0.25* (0.10)	-0.14 (0.14)	-0.28* (0.13)
Democratic president	-0.05 (0.03)	-0.02 (0.04)	-0.02 (0.03)	-0.04 (0.02)	-0.02 (0.04)	-0.03 (0.03)	0.06 (0.13)	0.41** (0.15)	-0.08 (0.13)	0.03 (0.09)	0.43** (0.14)	-0.03 (0.11)
Constant	0.09** (0.03)	0.15*** (0.03)	0.08*** (0.02)	0.48*** (0.14)	0.52** (0.17)	0.29** (0.10)	4.42*** (0.10)	3.60*** (0.11)	4.29*** (0.09)	1.73*** (0.51)	2.14*** (0.50)	2.62*** (0.37)
Controls	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
R-squared	0.012	0.001	0.022	0.163	0.100	0.120	0.012	0.029	0.015	0.296	0.200	0.242
DF	718	503	581	704	488	561	718	503	581	704	488	561

Standard errors in parentheses

Controls: gender, race, constitutional knowledge, Trump approval, education, age. Models run by PartyID of respondent. D/R/I at column heads indicate Democratic respondents, Republican respondents, and Independent respondents. Independent-leaners are grouped with the party they lean towards. This table presents estimates using both the full, five-point dependent variable and a binary version of that same variable. Respondents were asked *How appropriate do you think it is within American democracy for the president to [action]?* DV Response options: *Definitely appropriate, somewhat appropriate, neither appropriate nor innappropriate, somewhat innappropriate, definitely innappropriate*. Full DV models use all five points. Binary DV models code definitely or somewhat appropriate as a 1 and the other response options as a 0, so can be interpreted as whether or not the respondent thought the action was appropriate in a democracy. Baseline category for experiment: president without any party label. Graphs in the paper present estimates from the Binary DV ATE (no controls) models.

\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$

Table A10: Experiment 1: Directs the FBI to investigate his political opponents prior to the upcoming election (Severe Violation)

	Binary DV ATE			Binary DV with Controls			Full DV ATE			Full DV with Controls		
	D	R	I	D	R	I	D	R	I	D	R	I
Republican president	0.03 (0.03)	-0.02 (0.05)	-0.01 (0.04)	0.02 (0.03)	-0.03 (0.05)	-0.03 (0.04)	-0.09 (0.10)	-0.09 (0.16)	-0.04 (0.13)	-0.06 (0.10)	-0.07 (0.16)	0.03 (0.12)
Democratic president	0.05 (0.03)	-0.05 (0.04)	-0.02 (0.04)	0.05 (0.03)	-0.09 (0.04)	-0.03 (0.04)	-0.29* (0.13)	0.30 (0.16)	-0.14 (0.14)	-0.27** (0.11)	0.44** (0.15)	-0.11 (0.12)
Constant	0.05*** (0.01)	0.20*** (0.03)	0.11*** (0.03)	0.55*** (0.14)	0.35** (0.11)	0.31** (0.11)	4.48*** (0.06)	3.77*** (0.12)	4.19*** (0.09)	1.98*** (0.50)	2.66*** (0.41)	2.86*** (0.35)
Controls	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
R-squared	0.007	0.003	0.001	0.131	0.083	0.075	0.013	0.016	0.003	0.219	0.172	0.196
DF	718	503	580	704	488	560	718	503	580	704	488	560

Standard errors in parentheses

Controls: gender, race, constitutional knowledge, Trump approval, education, age. Models run by PartyID of respondent. D/R/I at column heads indicate Democratic respondents, Republican respondents, and Independent respondents. Independent-leaners are grouped with the party they lean towards. This table presents estimates using both the full, five-point dependent variable and a binary version of that same variable. Respondents were asked *How appropriate do you think it is within American democracy for the president to [action]?* DV Response options: *Definitely appropriate, somewhat appropriate, neither appropriate nor innappropriate, somewhat innappropriate, definitely innappropriate*. Full DV models use all five points. Binary DV models code definitely or somewhat appropriate as a 1 and the other response options as a 0, so can be interpreted as whether or not the respondent thought the action was appropriate in a democracy. Baseline category for experiment: president without any party label. Graphs in the paper present estimates from the Binary DV ATE (no controls) models.

\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$

Table A11: Experiment 1: Orders the Attorney General to not prosecute one of the president’s political allies (Severe Violation)

	Binary DV ATE			Binary DV with Controls			Full DV ATE			Full DV with Controls		
	D	R	I	D	R	I	D	R	I	D	R	I
Republican president	0.01 (0.03)	0.01 (0.04)	-0.03 (0.03)	0.03 (0.03)	0.01 (0.04)	-0.03 (0.03)	-0.01 (0.13)	-0.04 (0.15)	0.08 (0.13)	-0.13 (0.11)	-0.10 (0.14)	0.10 (0.11)
Democratic president	-0.02 (0.02)	-0.06 (0.04)	0.02 (0.04)	0.01 (0.02)	-0.08* (0.04)	0.01 (0.04)	0.13 (0.10)	0.19 (0.13)	-0.04 (0.14)	-0.02 (0.09)	0.25* (0.12)	0.04 (0.12)
Constant	0.07*** (0.02)	0.16*** (0.03)	0.09*** (0.03)	0.56*** (0.14)	0.12 (0.08)	0.24** (0.07)	4.41*** (0.08)	3.57*** (0.10)	4.06*** (0.10)	1.39** (0.46)	2.82*** (0.31)	2.28*** (0.30)
Controls	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
R-squared	0.002	0.006	0.003	0.144	0.087	0.086	0.004	0.007	0.002	0.308	0.162	0.270
DF	718	503	581	704	488	561	718	503	581	704	488	561

Standard errors in parentheses

Controls: gender, race, constitutional knowledge, Trump approval, education, age. Models run by PartyID of respondent. D/R/I at column heads indicate Democratic respondents, Republican respondents, and Independent respondents. Independent-leaners are grouped with the party they lean towards. This table presents estimates using both the full, five-point dependent variable and a binary version of that same variable. Respondents were asked *How appropriate do you think it is within American democracy for the president to [action]?* DV Response options: *Definitely appropriate, somewhat appropriate, neither appropriate nor innappropriate, somewhat innappropriate, definitely innappropriate*. Full DV models use all five points. Binary DV models code definitely or somewhat appropriate as a 1 and the other response options as a 0, so can be interpreted as whether or not the respondent thought the action was appropriate in a democracy. Baseline category for experiment: president without any party label. Graphs in the paper present estimates from the Binary DV ATE (no controls) models.

\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$

Table A12: Experiment 1: Refuses to publicly acknowledge he lose the presidential election and will not admit his opponent’s win was legitimate (Severe Violation)

	Binary DV ATE			Binary DV with Controls			Full DV ATE			Full DV with Controls		
	D	R	I	D	R	I	D	R	I	D	R	I
Republican president	-0.02 (0.03)	0.00 (0.05)	-0.05 (0.04)	-0.03 (0.03)	0.01 (0.04)	-0.05 (0.03)	0.08 (0.13)	0.12 (0.16)	0.23 (0.14)	0.08 (0.11)	0.09 (0.14)	0.21 (0.13)
Democratic president	0.01 (0.02)	-0.09 (0.05)	-0.02 (0.04)	0.00 (0.02)	-0.07 (0.04)	-0.02 (0.03)	-0.15 (0.11)	0.47** (0.16)	0.18 (0.13)	-0.12 (0.09)	0.43** (0.15)	0.13 (0.11)
Constant	0.07*** (0.02)	0.20*** (0.04)	0.11*** (0.03)	0.65*** (0.15)	0.41** (0.13)	0.54*** (0.14)	4.47*** (0.07)	3.55*** (0.11)	4.02*** (0.10)	1.61** (0.54)	2.96*** (0.49)	1.98*** (0.38)
Controls	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
R-squared	0.002	0.011	0.005	0.163	0.109	0.153	0.009	0.022	0.008	0.263	0.162	0.213
DF	718	503	581	704	488	561	718	503	581	704	488	561

Standard errors in parentheses

Controls: gender, race, constitutional knowledge, Trump approval, education, age. Models run by PartyID of respondent. D/R/I at column heads indicate Democratic respondents, Republican respondents, and Independent respondents. Independent-leaners are grouped with the party they lean towards. This table presents estimates using both the full, five-point dependent variable and a binary version of that same variable. Respondents were asked *How appropriate do you think it is within American democracy for the president to [action]?* DV Response options: *Definitely appropriate, somewhat appropriate, neither appropriate nor innappropriate, somewhat innappropriate, definitely innappropriate*. Full DV models use all five points. Binary DV models code definitely or somewhat appropriate as a 1 and the other response options as a 0, so can be interpreted as whether or not the respondent thought the action was appropriate in a democracy. Baseline category for experiment: president without any party label. Graphs in the paper present estimates from the Binary DV ATE (no controls) models.

\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$

Table A13: Experiment 1: Publicly supports an incident where his supporters punched members of the other party at a political rally (Severe Violation)

	Binary DV ATE			Binary DV with Controls			Full DV ATE			Full DV with Controls		
	D	R	I	D	R	I	D	R	I	D	R	I
Republican president	0.01 (0.02)	0.02 (0.05)	-0.02 (0.03)	0.02 (0.02)	-0.01 (0.04)	0.00 (0.03)	0.03 (0.09)	-0.04 (0.16)	0.09 (0.13)	-0.04 (0.10)	-0.01 (0.14)	-0.04 (0.12)
Democratic president	0.07 (0.04)	-0.05 (0.04)	0.01 (0.03)	0.08** (0.03)	-0.04 (0.04)	0.02 (0.03)	-0.27 (0.14)	0.45** (0.15)	0.11 (0.13)	-0.36** (0.12)	0.36* (0.14)	0.02 (0.12)
Constant	0.04** (0.01)	0.14*** (0.03)	0.08*** (0.02)	0.70*** (0.15)	0.63*** (0.17)	0.33*** (0.09)	4.57*** (0.07)	3.75*** (0.12)	4.10*** (0.09)	1.41* (0.55)	2.12*** (0.53)	2.48*** (0.39)
Controls	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
R-squared	0.014	0.008	0.002	0.228	0.133	0.111	0.017	0.031	0.002	0.308	0.159	0.200
DF	718	503	580	704	488	560	718	503	580	704	488	560

Standard errors in parentheses

Controls: gender, race, constitutional knowledge, Trump approval, education, age. Models run by PartyID of respondent. D/R/I at column heads indicate Democratic respondents, Republican respondents, and Independent respondents. Independent-leaners are grouped with the party they lean towards. This table presents estimates using both the full, five-point dependent variable and a binary version of that same variable. Respondents were asked *How appropriate do you think it is within American democracy for the president to [action]?* DV Response options: *Definitely appropriate, somewhat appropriate, neither appropriate nor innappropriate, somewhat innappropriate, definitely innappropriate*. Full DV models use all five points. Binary DV models code definitely or somewhat appropriate as a 1 and the other response options as a 0, so can be interpreted as whether or not the respondent thought the action was appropriate in a democracy. Baseline category for experiment: president without any party label. Graphs in the paper present estimates from the Binary DV ATE (no controls) models.

\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$

Table A14: Experiment 2: Proportion Supporting Postponing the Election By PartyID (Strongly + Somewhat Support)

<i>Democratic Respondents</i>								
	<b>Labeled</b>	<b>Unlabeled</b>	<b>Difference</b>	<b>P-value</b>	<b>SE</b>	<b>95% CI</b>		<b>N</b>
Republican condition (out-party)	0.13	0.10	0.03	0.58	0.05	-0.07	0.12	369
Democratic condition (in-party)	0.36	0.18	0.19	0.00*	0.06	0.08	0.29	352
<i>Republican Respondents</i>								
	<b>Labeled</b>	<b>Unlabeled</b>	<b>Difference</b>	<b>P-value</b>	<b>SE</b>	<b>95% CI</b>		<b>N</b>
Republican condition (in-party)	0.54	0.41	0.13	0.05†	0.07	0.00	0.26	257
Democratic condition (out-party)	0.28	0.35	-0.07	0.28	0.06	-0.19	0.06	247
<i>Independent Respondents</i>								
	<b>Labeled</b>	<b>Unlabeled</b>	<b>Difference</b>	<b>P-value</b>	<b>SE</b>	<b>95% CI</b>		<b>N</b>
Republican condition	0.24	0.30	-0.06	0.30	0.06	-0.18	0.06	299
Democratic condition	0.26	0.24	0.02	0.69	0.06	-0.09	0.14	285

\* $p < 0.05$ , † $p < 0.1$

Independent-leaners are grouped with the party they lean towards.

Table A15: Experiment 2: Proportion Supporting Postponing the Election By Trump Approval (Strongly + Somewhat Approve)

	<i>Respondents who approve of President Trump</i>							
	<b>Labeled</b>	<b>Unlabeled</b>	<b>Difference</b>	<b>P-value</b>	<b>SE</b>	<b>95% CI</b>		<b>N</b>
Republican condition	0.52	0.45	0.07	0.22	0.06	-0.04	0.18	378
Democratic condition	0.34	0.35	-0.01	0.80	0.05	-0.12	0.09	352

	<i>Respondents who do not approve of President Trump</i>							
	<b>Labeled</b>	<b>Unlabeled</b>	<b>Difference</b>	<b>P-value</b>	<b>SE</b>	<b>95% CI</b>		<b>N</b>
Republican condition	0.08	0.15	-0.07	0.03*	0.03	-0.13	-0.01	632
Democratic condition	0.27	0.16	0.11	0.01*	0.04	0.03	0.18	637

\*= $p < 0.05$ , † =  $p < 0.1$

Independent-leaners are grouped with the party they lean towards. To measure Trump approval, respondents were asked “Do you approve or disapprove of the way Donald Trump is handling his job as president?” Response options: *strongly approve, somewhat approve, neither approve nor disapprove, somewhat disapprove, strongly disapprove*. Respondents were coded as 1 for approving of President Trump if they strongly or somewhat approved, and as 0 for not approving of President Trump if they responded with one of the other three response options.

Table A16: Experiment 2: Proportion Supporting Postponing the Election By Party Reputation (Extremely + Very Important)

<b>Republicans</b>	<i>Party Reputation Important</i>							height
	<b>Labeled</b>	<b>Unlabeled</b>	<b>Difference</b>	<b>P-value</b>	<b>SE</b>	<b>95% CI</b>		<b>N</b>
Republican condition (in-party)	0.65	0.64	0.01	0.91	0.12	-0.22	0.25	74
Democratic condition (out-party)	0.36	0.26	0.10	0.40	0.12	-0.14	0.35	76
<b>Democrats</b>	<b>Labeled</b>	<b>Unlabeled</b>	<b>Difference</b>	<b>P-value</b>	<b>SE</b>	<b>95% CI</b>		<b>N</b>
Republican condition (in-party)	0.24	0.11	0.13	0.21	0.10	-0.07	0.34	116
Democratic condition (out-party)	0.47	0.20	0.27	0.01*	0.10	0.07	0.47	113
<b>Republicans</b>	<i>Party Reputation Not Important</i>							
	<b>Labeled</b>	<b>Unlabeled</b>	<b>Difference</b>	<b>P-value</b>	<b>SE</b>	<b>95% CI</b>		<b>N</b>
Republican condition (in-party)	0.48	0.33	0.15	0.05†	0.08	0.00	0.31	183
Democratic condition (out-party)	0.24	0.40	-0.16	0.04*	0.07	-0.30	-0.01	172
<b>Democrats</b>	<b>Labeled</b>	<b>Unlabeled</b>	<b>Difference</b>	<b>P-value</b>	<b>SE</b>	<b>95% CI</b>		<b>N</b>
Republican condition (in-party)	0.07	0.10	-0.03	0.44	0.04	-0.11	0.05	253
Democratic condition (out-party)	0.30	0.17	0.13	0.03*	0.06	0.02	0.25	239

\*= $p < 0.05$ , † =  $p < 0.1$

Independents are not included in this chart because this question was only asked to people who expressed a preference for a party (independent-leaners are included with the party to which they leaned). To determine how important party reputation is to a respondent, they were asked “How important to you is it that people know that you are [a Republican/ a Democrat]?” Response options: *extremely important, very important, moderately important, slightly important, not at all important*. Respondents were coded as a 1 for political reputation being important to them if they answered that it was extremely or very important for others to know their political affiliation.